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THE CATHEDRAL OF JUNK:
CULTURAL CRITIQUE THROUGH YARD ART

by

M. Ruth Foster

A Thesis

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

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ABSTRACT

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An anti-monument to conspicuous consumption, The *Cathedral of Junk* was begun as personal expression and has grown into social commentary on the excess of consumerist waste. This thesis examines the social critique inherent in the Austin, Texas yard art structure. To fully understand the implications of the artwork, chapters situate the *Cathedral of Junk* within its peer group of yard art, examine the significance and use of recycled materials within art, and show how the materials and makeup of the *Cathedral of Junk* reveals its maker's critique of society's obsession with consumerism.

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PROLOGUE

When I arrived to visit a friend in Austin, Texas, I had a list of things to see. I had done my homework and was scoping the city for its potential as a future home. It was my first time in Texas and I was concerned with seeing the city's alleged eccentricities that promised to make me feel a part of the culture and to keep me entertained year-round. The *Cathedral of Junk* was on the list.

Neither my friend nor his roommate had heard of the *Cathedral of Junk*, but they were equally intrigued. I followed the instructions in the weekly *Austin Chronicle* to call the *Cathedral's* owner before turning up. "I'll be at work," Vince Hannemann said over the phone, "But come on back. The dogs will be inside the house. Don't let them scare you." And off we went, trekking to the working-class neighborhood in South Austin to view this oddity first hand.

Though I did not meet its maker on my first visit, Vince Hanneman's creation may have been the catalyst for my love affair with the city of Austin. The site was all encompassing, a playground made of scraps and a wonderland of light and color. When I later moved to the Texas capital I recommended the site to everyone I met. I introduced every roommate to Hannemann's construction, and on my third trip I met the maker of the *Cathedral*. He was sipping Lone Star with friends and grilling hot dogs. The *Cathedral of Junk* was still mesmerizing.

Later I caught a glimpse of the interior of Hanneman's house. What I saw inside was astonishing; it was the antithesis of the immaculate structure in the yard. The home was in disrepair and almost bare, as if someone had just moved in or was about to move out. The walls were cracked and the place was dusty. He clearly took great pride in the

Cathedral of Junk and focused creative energy there rather than the private quarters of his house.

In March of 2010 the public was no longer welcomed to the yard. After the complaint of a neighbor stated the attraction brought too much traffic to the neighborhood, the city closed access to the *Cathedral of Junk*. The city demanded Hannemann request a building permit for the site. In order to acquire the permit, he had to demolish a sizeable chunk of the *Cathedral* before the city would sign off on his “auxiliary structure”. At this date of writing, the public is again allowed to explore Hannemann’s yard so long as he does not charge admission and maintains the structure within the city’s building codes.

INTRODUCTION

The story of the *Cathedral of Junk* and its maker are similar to other art environments and visionary gardens. While the intricate structure has been the subject matter of local papers and internet blogs, it has not been featured in scholarly literature. This paper seeks to acknowledge the creation as artwork, contextualize the *Cathedral of Junk* within 21st century art and culture. It draws the conclusion that the *Cathedral of Junk* is a significant and meaningful piece of cultural commentary.

In order to more fully understand the *Cathedral of Junk* as a work of art within the larger canon of art history, this paper will examine the structure through multiple lenses. Following a visual description of the structure in chapter one, the second chapter will contextualize the *Cathedral of Junk* within the category of yard art. Several other yard art environments are detailed to give the reader a better understanding of yard art as a whole. Chapter two divides yard art into four categories: African-American vernacular yard shows, environments whose makers are inspired by what they perceive as being a societal need, displays dealing with visionary and religious issues and constructions that are primarily personal expression, comparing and contrasting Hannemann's structure to each type. The *Cathedral of Junk* is parallel to some facet of each category, whether purely visual, such as the parallels to African American vernacular yards, or in its connections to religious yard art by way of the inspiration of yard shrines or the religious connotations of the structure's name. Ultimately, the *Cathedral of Junk* best fits into the category of personal expression, as Hannemann, a Caucasian self-taught hobbyist, began the structure as merely something to do in his spare time, adding on once part to the next until the formation of the Cathedral had occurred.

Indicative of yard art is the use of scrap and recycled materials as a medium for artistic expression. Thus, the third chapter examines the history, theory, and meaning behind such use of goods deemed unusable by the wider society who labeled the items as trash, discarding them as worthless. After considering the history and significance of these elements – the history of the *Cathedral of Junk* and the history of yard art, and the significance of recycled goods as medium – chapter four considers anthropological theories surrounding consumer goods and extrapolates that given the research presented, the *Cathedral* is a piece of cultural commentary regarding America's abundance of waste and habits of gross excess. Hannemann began his structure as a hobby, but arguably it culminates as a piece of yard art as relevant and socially critical as Kienholz' *Portable War Memorial* and as tongue-in-cheek as Andy Warhol's Campbell's Soup Cans. Like the soup cans that began as a parody on consumer goods and ended as an item to be consumed, the *Cathedral of Junk* is now consumed as a tourist attraction; the very thing the monument critiques supports it.

Culturally relevant art often pokes at the normative systems of behavior and raises many questions. The *Cathedral of Junk* poses many such questions about the art and its meaning: What is the structure? Is it art or a hobby? How was it made and why? What does it mean? And does it matter? These questions can, and perhaps should, arise from any piece of art. This paper presents research for consideration when answering these questions about the *Cathedral of Junk*. Given the subjective nature of art, some viewers may consider the *Cathedral of Junk* merely an obsessive hobby, yet the undertones of a critique on throwaway culture become overt when presented with the information in this paper. The *Cathedral of Junk* does have a meaning: junk is in excessive abundance in a

culture that worships its mechanism of production, conspicuous consumption. Its commentary is timely and palatable, wrapped in an elaborate display that is set in domestic backyard space. *The Cathedral of Junk* is for anyone to view; Hannemann then allows his audience to draw individual conclusions from aesthetic wonder to consumer critique, such as a nostalgic interaction with the objects or acknowledgement of the prevalence of Western discarded goods.

CHAPTER ONE: Description

The Cathedral of Junk, which was begun in 1989 by Vince Hannemann (b. 1963) in Austin, Texas, is a literal manifestation of its name (Fig. 1). Making an accurate description of the Cathedral's huge layout and its mass of decorative materials is daunting, especially in view of the fact that it changes from day to day as the artist adds to it. Even Hannemann has been faced with the challenge of describing the Cathedral of Junk. For him, the Cathedral is "a giant bowerbird's nest made of shiny metal items all wired together."¹ A Chinese-puzzle of various discarded objects form the general layout of a space made from what most people might consider junk. A network of passageways connects a labyrinth of airy dome-like rooms, each featuring a set of unique cultural discards, for example, rubber ducks within a primarily yellow section. The armature of the *Cathedral* is scrap metal of varying types – bicycle wheels, hubcaps, grates, mattress springs, tubing, and unidentified pieces of metal seemingly salvaged from a rusty junk heap. Adorning the metal armature are broken children's toys, dolls, action figures, CD-ROM discs, beads, glass bottles, trophies, ceramic figurines and dishes, signs, non-functional TVs, mostly intact lawn furniture, and an endless list of commercial product remnants.

The open main dome (fig. 2) acts as a high-ceilinged oblong foyer that is wired together with mostly extension cords. The chords provide an added stability to its arch-like voussoirs and abutments. Centrally placed and the largest space in the *Cathedral*,

¹ Robert Crease and Charles Mann, "Backyard Creators of Art That Says, 'I did it, I'm here'," *Smithsonian* 14 (August 1983): 87.

visitors inevitably return to the main dome like the central portion of a cave. There are three passages off of the foyer. Choosing the doorway to the right presents the viewer with two options: a hill with bowling balls and yard ornaments or a path continuing along the *Cathedral* that leads to a staircase and a small nook on the second level. The staircase is made of tires filled with concrete and is adorned by scissors, wire cutters, and glass objects pressed into the cement (figs. 3-5).

The center passage off the foyer leads either to a covered, dense cave-like space or presents another way to access the staircase. The cave-like passage ultimately leads to the outside of the *Cathedral* and into the backyard (fig. 6) where two smaller structures are set in its corners. In one, a freestanding fort is nestled near the fence, resembling forts made in childhood bedrooms from blankets draped over furniture. This fort's wooden exterior is far sturdier than blankets and is built for the outdoors (fig. 7). The other corner holds a pile of bricks and stone that resembles an altar or a mantelpiece and displays trophies and knickknacks of horses and chess pieces (figs.8-9).

The third passage off the main dome leads to the left. The structure contains a throne – one of the few parts built using concrete with embedded mosaic tiling (fig. 10). The background to the throne is a wall vertically lined with crutches along with CDs, picture frames, license plates, bicycle frames, bowling balls, swords, figurines, and the like. Often sections of the *Cathedral* are organized by color and type: a “yellow room” leads to the staircase, a pillar that is a part of the exterior is adorned with varying shades of red plastic toys, and a table is covered in only telephones (fig. 11). A conglomeration of wind chimes in the main dome provide a peaceful and enchanting soundscape to accompany the reflections of mirrors, colored glass bottles, and CD discs on its interior.

The chimes create a meditative environment and an aura of spiritual introspection within the chaos of puzzled-together junk.

History

A jack-of-all-trades with a background in construction and landscaping, Hannemann has been creating installations using found objects since the age of sixteen.² Illustrating the influence of an artist's background on his or her formation, Carl Jung contends, "personal causes have as much or as little to do with a work of art as the soil with the plant that springs from it."³ Hannemann's "terroir" certainly contributed to his style and methods; his early childhood was spent in New York, surrounded by the religious yard shrines of Italian-Americans. Before relocating to Austin, Hannemann spent his young adulthood living next to a landfill in Sante Fe, New Mexico, where he built his first yard sculpture in 1979 at age 16 (fig. 12). The fact that Hannemann's great-grandfather was an artist and his father an architect gave him a certain amount of artistic license. "I know that art is a viable lifestyle," he says, "that gave me permission to do what I like."⁴ He has also said that, "It always helps to have a little permission from the previous generation to help go a little bit further because they kind of show you the road...nobody has blazed a trail as far as – I mean, there is no book as far as how to do

² Evan Burns, "The Junk King," *Vimeo*, 2012, <http://vimeo.com/49786954>.

³ Carl Jung, *The Spirit in Man, Art, and Literature*, trans. R. F. C. Hull (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1966), 70.

⁴ Vince Hannemann, in conversation with the author, January 14, 2013. This conversation is recorded in the Appendix found at the end of this paper.

something like this,” Hannemann explains, “I try to make it up as I go. I wish I had these other people to consult with and say, you know, how did you do it?”⁵

Hannemann started the huge mixed-media sculpture in Austin as a bunch of hubcaps on his fence. Intended as a private sitting area, the project quickly expanded into most of the backyard space. Its maze-like architecture is due to his process of adding each section upon the last. “I kept telling myself ‘Oh, I’ll just do a little bit more.’ That’s the way it starts off, very loosely... then I just keep adding more stuff to it, wiring them on, so everything is sort of connected to everything else.”⁶ He describes the older parts of the *Cathedral* as very “dense”⁷ (fig. 15). These areas teem with junk and are so thick with material that they require extended visual exploration. For instance, behind a hanging trophy is a toy figurine from a happy meal next to an old typewriter, and these items are tied together with a telephone cord. The adjacent area is filled with more diverse items – a crutch, lockers, a public transportation ticket – the items go on endlessly in layers that build up with walls of the structure. Hannemann remarked about the density of materials, “It got a life of its own after a certain point, so I kind of just have to go with the flow.”⁸

⁵ Hannemann, in conversation with the author, January 14, 2013. See Appendix.

⁶ Jill Nokes and Pat Jasper, *Yard Art and Handmade Places: Extraordinary Expressions of Home*, (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), 98.

⁷ TravelChannelTV, “Austin’s Cathedral of Junk”, August 11, 2008, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=shHf9oJrTwo>.

⁸ Ashley Burt, Barbie Jabri, Amanda Herzer, and Alex McQuirter. “‘Junk King’ on the Cathedral of Junk,” October 3, 2011, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=a59tBypwEME>.

Hannemann reports that it was his mother who first called the structure *The Cathedral of Junk*. Believing that naming is a powerful spiritual act, Hannemann observes, “It really is a Cathedral,” he says, “It has a congregation. It serves a public purpose.”⁹ Its congregation is most certainly the thousands of visitors to the site, offering a public haven for reflection amongst cultural material, a playground of debris, and a symbol of the “weird” so cherished in Austin. It has also been the site of numerous weddings and birthday parties, a gathering place much like a Sunday social or weddings held in a church.

Throughout his life, Hannemann has held various day jobs, including construction, hospice care, food preparation, and landscape work.¹⁰ Working for an independent environmental organization called Ecology Action that includes the work of sorting recyclable goods from the local landfill, Hannemann actively engaged in collecting material during the first few years of residence in his Austin yard. After his work in the landfill ended, Hannemann ceased scavenging for materials, as he was already in possession of a wealth of junk.¹¹ Presently he collects material by donation rather than actively seeking more junk to add to his massive sculpture. Pilgrims to the *Cathedral of Junk* often contribute their own items as offerings for use in the structure.

⁹ Burns, “The Junk King”.

¹⁰ Vince Hannemann in conversation with the author, January 14, 2013.

¹¹ Nokes and Jasper, *Yard Art and Handmade Places*, 99.

“People just drop off stuff...it’s like Christmas everyday here,” Hannemann once remarked.¹²

Despite overwhelming popularity among visitors, the *Cathedral of Junk* has not always received a warm reception from locals. In March of 2010, neighbors complained about the increase in traffic on their street and the noise from constant visitors. As reported on the PBS NewsHour’s *Art Beat* of April 6, 2010, “Austin's Code Compliance Department told Hannemann that he either had to obtain a building permit and a certificate of occupancy, or tear down his 20-year-old, 33-foot-tall sculpture of wire and reclaimed trash.” The consequence of the 2010 complaint meant Hanemann had to tear down a substantial part of the *Cathedral* in order to meet building codes. “It was super-traumatic – like an amputation. There is a phantom limb pain I still experience from the part of the *Cathedral* that is gone,” he said. Distinct portions of the *Cathedral* had to be dismantled, including the throne room. The throne itself remains intact, but what once was an entire room for the seat is now a wall supporting the throne and open area on the surrounding sides. “The way they went about it was very heavy-handed,” he said. Hannemann felt the city treated him like a criminal from the start of the 2010 complaint, marking his house with signs that warned of dangerous conditions. Sixty tons of junk disappeared from the yard with the help of more than 200 volunteers in order for an engineer to sign off on the structure.¹³ Despite the initial threat of city forces, public

¹² Lauren Knapp, "In Austin, 'Cathedral of Junk' Might Be Headed for the Trash Heap," PBS Newshour Art Beat, April 6, 2010,

<http://www.pbs.org/newshour/art/blog/2010/04/cathedral-of-junk.html>.

¹³ Burns, “The Junk King”.

support of Hannemann's structure was able to levy cooperation from the city after former Texas state Senator Chuck Herring contacted Hannemann to cease demolition of the *Cathedral*.¹⁴ Hannemann was able to prove the structure could hold 3,200 pounds and resituated the creation to sit at least five feet from other properties in order to meet city codes.¹⁵ All such efforts resulted in success. Hannemann is now able to keep the space open for visitors but cannot have an entry gate, charge admission, or otherwise operate as a business. These restrictions are in order to comply with the address's residential zoning.¹⁶ Compliance has allowed Hannemann to continue tending to his backyard creation and sharing it with visitors.

Today

Throughout its history, the *Cathedral of Junk* has garnered a wide network of supporters. Even before its partial dismantling in 2010, it was given one of the "Best of Austin" awards as the "Best Shrine to Planned Obsolescence" (2006), given by the *Austin Chronicle*, the city's free weekly paper. Another "Best of Austin" award was given to the

¹⁴ Leah Wise, "'Cathedral of Junk' artist Vince Hannemann to keep landmark open," *Daily Texan*, 22 June 22, 2010, <http://uwire.com/2010/06/22/%E2%80%98cathedral-of-junk%E2%80%99-artist-vince-hannemann-to-keep-landmark-open/>.

¹⁵ Steve Alberts. "Cathedral of Junk Saved" KVUE News. 24 October 24, 2010, <http://www.kvue.com/news/Cathedral-of-Junk-saved-105647888.html>.

¹⁶ Wise, "Cathedral of Junk"

Cathedral in 2012 when it was named “Best Organized Chaos”.¹⁷ Today Hannemann’s creation continues to grow and attract visitors, nearly 10,000 a year. With the residuals of a commercial, Hannemann has been able to build, operate and guide visitors through the *Cathedral of Junk* full-time for the last five years.¹⁸ “It’s a job,” he said, “but I wouldn’t do anything I didn’t like for this long.”¹⁹

At the same time, what began as a lark for Hannemann, or perhaps as an artistic experience grounded in process, has come to have additional layers of meaning for him.²⁰ For one thing Hannemann, who admittedly suffers from depression, has learned that his artistic practice offers distraction. Using the structure as a sort of driving purpose, Hannemann devotes his whole self to the expansive pile of junk that encompasses his yard. “Sometimes I think if it wasn’t for this, I don’t know where I’d be, exactly,” he says, “It’s some sort of anchor. It’s something that helps keep me doing something.” Part of what he has learned comes from the experience of others. As authors of *Yard Art and Handmade Places*, Jill Nokes and Pat Jasper, write about the *Cathedral of Junk*, its “sheer number of details simply overwhelms any generalities. . .” and it is the details that

¹⁷ Austin Chronicle. Best of Austin database. March 3, 2013, <http://www.austinchronicle.com/gyrobase/Awards/BestOfAustin/home>>

¹⁸ *CNN Money*. January 24, 2013. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F4ksAwrX3qQ>. published Jan 24, 2013

¹⁹ Hannemann in conversation with the author, January 14, 2013.

²⁰ “It’s not about getting attention for something,” Nokes and Jasper, *Yard Art and Handmade Places*, 99-100, observes about Hannemann; rather, it seems to her the making of the junk sculpture is about getting into a zone, similar to a gardener or a golfer, with the process as the payoff.

hook visitors. As Hannemann relates, the space is an impetus for a trip down memory lane, allowing patrons to identify with specific objects found in the structure from their own childhood, like a telephone that grandma had or a toy horse used for play.

Perhaps, most significant to Hannemann is the Cathedral's overarching theme of recycling, which strikes a responsive chord with visitors who grew up during the Great Depression, environmental activists, and those who come from countries that traditionally reuse materials. "There was a guy visiting one time from some South American country, and he told me, 'Boy, we just don't have junk like this lying around to build something like this with. All this stuff are things people would probably use, either melt it down, beat it into something, or make something out of it, but not just lying around.'"²¹

Hannemann has utilized the discards of consumer culture in the United States in a similar way. While the junk is not beat into something utilitarian, the *Cathedral of Junk* is its own reinterpretation of the junk that does lie around one of the wealthiest countries in the world. "Junk is really pretty, and it's free, and it's everywhere," he said.²²

²¹ Nokes and Jasper, 99-100.

²² Knapp, Lauren. "In Austin, 'Cathedral of Junk' Might Be Headed for the Trash Heap" *PBS Newshour Art Beat*. 6 April 2010. <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/art/blog/2010/04/cathedral-of-junk.html>> accessed 5 January 2013.

The use of found objects and recycled goods has also led Hannemann to comment, in one of the few statements that directly links his work to spiritual/religious beliefs that,

It strikes me as a sin, or a crime, or something to get rid of the stuff. It still has some life in it. It seems like it is broken, but it's not, really. I just think it's very symbolic of how a church might be. A lot of us are broken in the same way. We're not perfect anymore. We're not brand new and shiny. But we're still here and, you know, we can still serve some sort of function - especially when we're put together with all the other 'broken pieces'. And it makes a beautiful whole, you know, the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.²³

Although Hannemann does not embrace any particular set of religious beliefs, he uses the analogy of a church body to help explain the meaning of the *Cathedral of Junk*.²⁴ Just as the scrap-pieces that he has woven together make the *Cathedral* a viable artistic creation, the church body is composed of humans that serve a function in society, despite any level of inner brokenness. His comparison of cast-off junk to broken people offers insight into the *Cathedral of Junk* and the artist who made it, a clear indication that this heap of rusty metal in Hannemann's backyard is something more than just a hobby gone wild.

²³ Knapp. "In Austin, 'Cathedral of Junk' Might Be Headed for the Trash Heap".

²⁴ *The Bible*. 1 Corinthians 12:12 states, "The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ."

CHAPTER TWO

Yard Art

Yard art can often be considered an overgrowth of a hobby or a display of eccentricity. Not always considered art by their creators, yard environments are impossible to ignore as a significant and visible imaginative effort. The art that adorns yards is a personal vision. It extends from the self and the individual's sense of home into the visible outdoor sphere. Message or not, yard art is created by an individual for self-satisfaction and the enjoyment of sharing the yard with others.

Defining yard art within a pre-negotiated art historical tradition is a tricky matter. Yard art has sometimes been characterized as folk art, but as Francis Abernethy, author and member of the Texas Folk Society, states, "yard art does not qualify as folk art with some critics because...it is not in the respected parade of tradition (like quilting patterns or painted Pennsylvania hex signs)."¹ As one writer observes, "Structures and environments tend to be more individual efforts based on personal visions, agendas, or utopian concepts, rather than the tradition-based folk art which embodied the goals and systems of a community."² Nor is yard art utilitarian or usually rooted in skills that are passed through generations, thus exempting it from traditional folk art. Rather, yard art is more closely aligned with contemporary folk art, which embraces self-taught expression that is not confined to traditional techniques or utilitarian purpose. Yard art, like contemporary folk art, is characterized by improvisation. What distinguishes yard art is

¹ Francis Edward Abernethy, *Folk Art in Texas* (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), 15.

² Joseph F. Lomax, "The Orange Show" in *Folk Art in Texas*, ed. Francis Edward Abernethy, (Dallas: Southern Methodist University Press, 1985), 41.

the element of its definition by place specificity. Yard art is situated by its location, much like the site-specificity of installations in mainstream art. The environments are typically made for and tied solely to the yard, whereas the majority of contemporary folk art objects can be moved to an endless number of locations. While yard art is sometimes categorized under the umbrella of contemporary folk art due to its eccentric nature and individualism, its characteristics of using the “coarsest materials” and the specificity of place distinguish it from other contemporary folk art.³

Perhaps best stated by John Beardsley, yard art is “part architecture, part sculpture, part landscape.” He goes on to say that,

“visionary environments seem to consistently and purposefully defy the usual categories of artistic practice. Likewise, they evade the normal descriptive terms: these creations display too great an indifference to the niceties of composition and technique to have earned admiration as fine art; but they are too individualistic and too loosely linked to tradition to have been accepted – in most academic circles at least – as [traditional] folk art.”⁴

As an extension of the home-space, yard art often displays eccentricities of individual effort. It exists in a variety of forms with varying motives for creation. Vince Hannemann is exemplary of yard art creators; his *Cathedral of Junk* was begun out of a self-motivated desire to create. He now shares the fruits of his yard work with his many annual visitors.

Artists, critics, and scholars have been attending to the many forms and meanings of yard art since the late 1960s. Giving the off-beat art its first national attention,

³ John Beardsley. “Environments, Folk” in *The Folk Art Encyclopedia*. ed. Gerard Wertkin (Routledge, 2013), 154. Beardsley refers to the “coarsest materials” as cement and common rocks at the Garden of Eden, and broken glass, tiles, and other kinds of brightly colored and decorative junk used at Watts Towers, Paradise Garden, and the Orange Show.

⁴ John Beardsley, *Gardens of Revelation* (New York: Abbeville Press, 1995), 8.

Photographer Gregg Blasdel characterized the work as being the expression of “grass-roots” artists in a groundbreaking 1968 *Art in America* photo essay.⁵ Then, in 1974, the Walker Art Center in Minneapolis, Minn., mounted an exhibition entitled *Naïves and Visionaries*. The show featured photographs of environments from nine artists that defy the notions of folk art with yards that involve complex, non-utilitarian art as individualistic expression, rather than a collective expression.⁶

Since the time of initial recognition as a discrete form of artistic expression, several books have mentioned and explored the many manifestations of yard art, most notably *Gardens of Revelation* by John Beardsley (1995), *Self-Made Worlds* by Marc Sloan and Roger Manley (1977), the two-volume work *Souls Grown Deep* by William Arnett and Paul Arnett (2001, 2002), *Sublime Spaces and Visionary Worlds: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists* by Leslie Umberger (2007) and *Fantasy Worlds* by John Maizels (1999). Other writers too numerous to name have also taken up the study of individual sites, while scholars such as Robert Farris Thompson’s, *Face of the Gods: Art and Altars of Africa and the African Americas* (1993) and Grey Gundaker’s and Judith McWillie’s, *No Space Hidden: The Spirit of African American Yard Work* (1998) have confined their research to the African American “yard show,” an artistic expression informed by the traditions and philosophic values of Kongo culture and thus distinct from other forms of yard art. Despite so much scholarly attention, no publication aside from

⁵ Gregg Blasdel, “The Grass-Roots Artist,” *Art in America* 56 (1968), 38-41.

⁶ Martin Friedman. “Introduction” in The Walker Art Center *Naïves and Visionaries*, exh. cat. with text by Friedman, Lynda Roscoe, Greg Blasdel, et. al (EP Dutton & Co., New York, 1974), 7.

that of Beardsley has treated yard art as a whole; instead, most publications focus on some form of ethnic, motivational, thematic, or aesthetic aspect these gardens share.

Hoping to situate Hannemann's achievement within its art historical framework and thereby better understand it as more than a peripheral art form, this chapter provides a brief overview of yard art as a whole, while exploring various ethnicities and social traditions that may have influenced or have some parallels with the artist's work. With consideration and influence of the descriptive categorization of major scholars in the field, this chapter places four major modes of artistic expression under the umbrella of yard art: 1) African-American vernacular yard shows, 2) environments inspired by their makers' regard for a collective concern, 3) displays dealing with visionary and religious issues and 4) constructions that are primarily personal expression. Still, the margins between these categories often blur as environments sometimes fit more than one categorization. The categories are not finite, but offer one approach to understanding the vast genre of yard art as a whole.

African-American Vernacular

African-American vernacular art employs a common visual vocabulary to explore issues of personal and collective identity rooted in tradition.⁷ Robert Farris Thompson, art historian and scholar, was the first to explore the depth of African-American vernacular art through the study of the Bakongo people (natives of today's Democratic Republic of the Congo) and the peoples they influenced and their movement via the Middle Passage to the Americas. Cultural expressions traveled with these enslaved Africans to the

⁷ Paul Arnett. "African American Folk Art" in *The Encyclopedia of American Folk Art*, eds. Gerard Wertkin and Lee Kogan (Routledge, 2004), 9-10.

Americas and appeared in cemetery decoration; slave graves were trimmed with carved figures and adorned with symbolic objects including clocks, lamps, pots, wheels, mirrors, and many more. The function of such objects was to ensure the containment and prosperity of a deceased soul. The decoration found near graves, often thought of as an extension of ancestors, was also often incorporated into the yard to create a material dialog between the living and the deceased.⁸

A set of symbols portrays the visual commonalities between the traditions of the Bakongo people and African-American graves and yard shows. For example, Thompson notes that the bottle tree, often found in Southern yards, symbolizes a presence from the cemetery and acts as an object of protection. In fact, many objects with flashing or reflective surfaces (mirrors, beetle wings, tinfoil, light bulbs, chrome hubcaps), which are considered to have a spirit-repelling or spirit-attracting flash, can be found decorating African American graves and contemporary yard shows. The Kongo design represented by a circle with a cross through the middle is known as a cosmogram and is found in yard shows and as early as the Colonial period in America. It signifies a cosmological map, identifying the key elements of the universe according to Bakongo thought.⁹ In yard shows, it is represented by circular objects such as wheels, tires, and hubcaps.

⁸ Robert Farris Thompson, *Face of the Gods* (New York: The Museum of African Art, 1993), 94.

⁹ Robert Farris Thompson, "Face of the Gods: The Artists and Their Altars," *African Arts* 28(1) 1995: 58. Note: The cosmogram can also take the shape of a cross without a circle, a diamond, or a diamond with adornments at each of its four points.

Inspired by Thompson's scholarship, anthropologist Grey Gundaker and art professor Judith McWillie spent years collecting stories, making interviews, and taking photographs to compile a lexicon of symbols that characterize and decipher African American vernacular expression.¹⁰ Among these are the diamond shape reminiscent of the Kongo cosmogram, interpreted as an eye of God, advancing wisdom, and a map to the soul; wheels or circular objects, recalling the sun and its cyclical structure of time and of the defeat of complacency through progressive action; cisterns, pipes and other hollow conduits, operating as conductors of messages to the dead; thrones and chairs set apart that are reserved for unseen visitors; wrapped or tied objects for protection; broken and inverted vessels in reference the other side where broken things are made whole; and several others.¹¹ Many of the symbols are flexible in meaning. For instance, wheels can mean the life giving cycle of the sun or complacent repetitive action. Or, in the case of flashing and reflective surfaces, the flash may repel spirits or it may be intended to attract spirits.

Many of the objects within the lexicon are found in African American vernacular environments. One such example is that of Joe Minter's *African Village in America* (begun 1979), an expansive display of sculptures within his Birmingham, Ala., property. Minter (b. 1942) created a material dialogue between the grave and the world of the

¹⁰ Grey Gundaker and Judith McWillie, *No Space Hidden: The Spirit of African American Yard Work* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 2005).

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 28-41.

living in his yard that is bordered by a segregated graveyard called Shadowlawn.¹² Included are vibrant constructions of wood, tin, other materials, and found object assemblages often made of bottles, wheels and other circular forms such as pipes, inner tubes, basketball hoops, and painted garbage can lids, as well as empty folding chairs, kitchen items, garden statuary, and hard hats.¹³ A replica slave ship built by Minter is set within the property, made from burnt timbers, a chain running down the ship's center, and nails, each representing a human being. The ship divides the yard into two sections – one of memorial works to black ancestors, an extension of the adjacent cemetery, and another portion to honor African-American Civil Rights heroes.¹⁴ Many of the assemblages function as social commentary and memorial, such as a room-size recreation of the Birmingham jail cell where Martin Luther King, Jr. wrote his famous letter and the civil rights landmark of the Edmund Pettus Bridge. More recent events have also been memorialized, such as the destruction of the World Trade Center and the shooting at Sandy Hook Elementary.

The aesthetic of African American vernacular art is astonishingly similar to the mish-mash of recycled objects in the *Cathedral of Junk*. The elements used in African American vernacular yard shows are also found embedded in the *Cathedral of Junk* without the Kongo meaning. Wind chimes made of used CDs are reflective and create a

¹² Kelly Ludwig. "Detour Art: Creative Discoveries Along the Backroads" in *Detour Art*, October 18, 2008, accessed March 20, 2012, <http://detourarttravels.blogspot.com/2008/10/joe-minters-african-village-in-america.html?m=1>.

¹³ Carol Crown. "Joe Minter's African Village." *Number*, 43 (2002/2003), 12.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

flashing interaction with the sun's rays (fig. 16). Hubcaps, wheels, tires, and other circular objects are also part of the structure, though unintended to evoke the cosmogram.

Yard shows, or "yard work", as many African American artists refer to their makeshift displays, create a sense of stable living conditions, ownership of property, and a positive outlook on a burdened past. These motivations can be easily extrapolated onto other yard art environments, including that of Hannemann. *The Cathedral of Junk* certainly marks Hannemann's territory and establishes a stable sense of structure within his property. In addition to the power to greet and defend property, Gundaker and McWillie argue that such yard work may be a way for African-Americans to deal with oppression.¹⁵ Characteristic to such yard shows is the sense of self-display and the interaction between the self and the surrounding community.¹⁶ In Minter's case, the story of his heritage is on display for the surrounding community and his visitors in order to teach African-American history and its merit. The concern for education is where Minter and Hannemann differ; Hannemann is not primarily concerned with educating his visitors about the theories of consumption or the history of waste. Instead, the *Cathedral of Junk* is a visual testament to excess that allows visitors to draw conclusions about the junk material on their own. In general, Hannemann does not narrate or give tours of the *Cathedral*. The only information surrounding the structure's history and meaning is found in a shed at the entrance to the backyard. There photographs of the *Cathedral* throughout the years of its construction and growth are posted along with a guestbook

¹⁵ Gundaker and McWillie, 154.

¹⁶ Charles Russell, "The Stations of the African American Passion", *Raw Vision* 68 (2009), 64.

and a map marking from where visitors have come to view the yard. Hannemann will answer questions about the structure, but the visitor must first approach him and ask the question.

Minter, alongside other artists such as Lonnie Holley, Mary Smith, Hawkins Boldin, and others, have created artworks grounded in the African American vernacular artistic tradition; their use of cost-off materials and social commentary is thus no surprise. Yet each yard is highly individualized. Minter's yard show spans from the times of the African homeland to Civil Rights to current events, an intentional effort to tell a cohesive story of African-American history. Though *African Village in America* shares many elements of design and material similarities to the *Cathedral of Junk*, Minter and others in the African American vernacular tradition are motivated by a distinct heritage that is different from Hannemann's story and structure.

Environments Grounded in a Sense of Community

Just as Joe Minter's yard celebrates African American heritage, the Thunder Mountain Monument of Frank Van Zant exalts his Native American ancestry. Born in Oklahoma of Creek descent, Van Zant (1921-1989) left home at age 14 to enlist in the Civilian Conservation Corps, then served in World War II. Afterwards, he attended theology school, but dropped out and began working as a sheriff's deputy for the next 20 years in Yuba City, Cal. He then ran for the sheriff's office and lost, began a second career as a private detective, and ultimately retired to Nevada to build an extraordinary yard display in honor of his Indian ancestors (fig. 31).¹⁷

¹⁷ "A Monumental Undertaking," accessed May 18, 2013, <http://www.thundermountainmonument.com/background.htm>.

Van Zant settled along Interstate-80 near Imlay, 160 miles east of Reno. There he began his monument by covering his travel trailer with concrete mixed with local stones and bottles. He added a second floor with a patio, then a tiny third story, and included in the walls objects as various as old typewriters, televisions, helmets, and plastic grapes.¹⁸ At the very top a tangle of white loops adorned the building as if it were crowned by bleached bones.¹⁹ Around the structure, Van Zant also began to sculpt with cement several life-size statues of his Native American heroes including Standing Bear and Quetzalcoatl. He also fashioned totem poles out of a multitude of materials including railroad ties, bicycle wheels, and bones. Ultimately, Thunder Mountain Monument covered five acres and included over 200 cement statues. Like Minter, Van Zant wanted his yard art to celebrate the aspirations and achievements of a group of people and to tell the story of his heritage, and like many African American vernacular artists, he also used found and cast-off objects to make his huge work of art. In fact, as reported by Ohlson, “Van Zant scavenged a 60-mile area around the monument, picking up refuse and

¹⁸ Kristin Ohlson, “The Story of Thunder Mountain Monument,” *Smithsonian Magazine*, April 9, 2010, accessed online May 18, 2013, <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/travel/The-Story-of-Thunder-Mountain-Monument.html?c=y&page=2>.

¹⁹ The main structure offered private living quarters. A number of other buildings, including a hostel, a 40’ x 60’ work shed, an underground hut, guest cabins, and a children’s playground were also on the property. It soon became the center of a hippie commune. Some sought out Van Zant as their spiritual guide, aspiring to, what he described as, the “pure and radiant heart.”

stripping wood from tumbled down buildings in ghost towns. ‘I’m using the white mans’ trash to build this Indian monument,’ he told everyone.”²⁰

Exemplifying a sense of community pride, and patriotism, a lesser known and smaller yard in Austin, Texas, was built by Ira Poole (fig. 32). Poole’s audience was originally the students at the elementary school where he taught, but then extended to his entire community. Ira Poole (b. 1940) began work on his yard in 1964. The city of Austin, Texas, prides itself on tolerating weird people and funky yard art; Poole’s yard is one of the most intriguing. “It’s just too unbelievable that some guy would have: a 900-pound concrete sphinx sitting on a raised slab of Texas, a replica of the Statue of Liberty, a fountain, a 3-D granite map of the U.S. and Mexico, and another smaller map of Texas with a yellow rose bush growing, yes, in the "heart" of it,” reports the Austin Chronicle when it named Poole’s yard the 1992 “Best Yard Art” in its annual Best of Directory.²¹

Intended to be a school project led by Poole during his career as a fifth grade teacher, the project was realized by Poole alone and placed in his yard on the busy Martin Luther King Jr. Drive in East Austin.²² Poole had planned that the making of a concrete 4’ x 12’ map of the United States, a human-sized metal replica of the Statue of Liberty that he found at an antique shop, and an American flag, would also originate in the classroom. However, when that did not work out, he placed the grouping in his front yard, called a press conference, and announced that he had assembled the figures as a

²⁰ Kristin Ohlson, “The Story of Thunder Mountain Monument”.

²¹ Best of Austin Database, *The Austin Chronicle*, accessed March 5, 2013, <http://www.austinchronicle.com/gyrobase/Awards/BestOfAustin?Award=824930>

²² Wesley Treat, et. al. *Weird Texas*. (New York: Sterling Publishing, 2005), 146.

commemorative gesture on the 200th anniversary of the U.S. Constitution. “As he wrote in his press release, he wanted to honor ‘the most famous document ever written in the history of the United States.’” He unveiled the monument on the Fourth of July, 1987.²³

Hannemann is doing the very same as Van Zant: using trash to build a monument, though the *Cathedral of Junk* is a monument not to the heritage of a people group but to the habits of a culture. Though Poole and Hannemann’s yard exist in the same city, motivations still separate the yards. Hannemann’s environment is not patriotic nor originally intended to draw a crowd, though it does now act as destination. Yet because both are situated in Austin, each yard contains a confident sense of reckless abandon around its construction. It is clear that the city gives creative permission to its residents to express themselves, whether in the front yard on a busy through street or a backyard in a residential area.

Van Zant and Poole make up a broad section of yard art that shows interest in the community at large. Each artist has pride in his heritage, desires to share it, and created yard art as a means of communicating a vision. In many ways their environments recall the social function of African American vernacular art; however, these environments are much more individualistic and do not derive from African tradition. Although these environments may seem much closer to the *Cathedral of Junk* than African American vernacular yards, Hannemann’s *Cathedral* did not originate as a structure motivated by the societal concerns represented by either tradition.

²³ *Weird Texas*. Weird U.S. Accessed online May 19, 2003 at http://www.weirdus.com/states/texas/personalized_properties/ira_poole/index.php

Religious Display: Shrines, Grottos, and Visions

The collective concerns of these publicly oriented displays also inform religious yard art. The best-known environments of this type are grounded either in the traditions of the Roman Catholic church or Evangelical Protestantism. Those that are inspired by Catholic beliefs share a common European tradition brought by immigrants to the shores of America. Those grounded in Evangelical Christianity are more idiosyncratic in expression. Each approach shares the underpinning of religious motivation.

The yard shrines based in Catholicism are mainly two types: small yard shrines in domestic yards and large cave-like grottos. The tradition of the yard shrine migrated with Italians around the turn of the century, as documented by social reformer Jacob Riis.²⁴ The reason for shrine construction is deeply personal. Often built as a process of prayer, the displays make tangible the pleas of their makers during a crisis; others are constructed as a prayer of thanksgiving.²⁵ Vince Hannemann was exposed to Catholic shrines during his early childhood in New York where Italian-American neighborhoods are festooned with figurines, photographs, and flowers dedicated to a specific saint. The shrine's enclosure usually takes the form of an inverted U-shaped concrete alcove that is either handmade and often ornamented or purchased straight from a lawn and garden center.

²⁴ Joseph Scjorra, "Yard Shrines and Sidewalk Altars of New York's Italian-Americans," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture III* (1989), 188.

²⁵ Daniel Arreola, "Mexican American Housescapes." *Geographical Review* 78 (3), 1988: 208.

Framing the saint's statue or photograph, are potted plants, plastic and/or real flowers, candles and sometimes even electric lights. Although they are personal creations, the shrines are an expression of the larger community's ethnic and religious values through collaborative adornment.²⁶

Similar shrines, sometimes called *nichos*, *capillas*, or *grutas*, can be found as a part of the overall Mexican-American housescape in the Southwestern United States, including Austin.²⁷ Heirs to the folk Catholicism of Mexico, the builders of these shrines favor trademark icons of the Virgin Mary especially in the form of Our Lady of Guadalupe. More often, Mexican-American yard shrines use household and available items and recycled materials to adorn the shrine, an aesthetic inherited from Mexico. During the remainder of his childhood in Santa Fe, Hannemann was likely surrounded by such yard shrines. Upon his move to Austin, he was most definitely situated in close proximity to many of the displays, predominantly located in the East Austin neighborhood surrounding E. Cesar Chavez Street a few miles from Hannemann's property (fig. 30).

Also inspired by Roman Catholicism, but much larger in scale, the grotto constructions of the late 19th century and early 20th century were a tradition imported from Europe. There the grottos were intended to replicate the sacred caves of the Holy Land, designed to provide a religious experience for Catholics unable to travel to the

²⁶ Sejorra, "Yard Shrines and Sidewalk Altars of New York's Italian-Americans," 185.

²⁷ Arreola, "Mexican American Housescapes.," 308. Note: Nichos (niches) is regional terminology focused in Tuscon, cappillas (little chapels) is used in San Antonio, and grutas (grottoes) is a term used in Los Angeles.

original Biblical sites.²⁸ In the United States, most grottoes were built in rural areas associated with small towns.²⁹ One of the most noted grottos is that of Father Paul Mathias Dobberstein (1872-1954).

Twelve years after its initial construction, Dobberstein's Grotto of the Redemption (fig. 33) was dedicated in 1924 at West Bend, Ia. Dobberstein went on to build six more grottos, two short of his planned nine structures as a shrine to honor the Virgin Mary who had answered his prayers for recovery from pneumonia. Dobberstein, who funded the grottos himself, used only those materials that he deemed the most worthy for his religious subjects: petrified wood, fossils, stalactites, crystals, turquoise, and other stones were gathered in Iowa or shipped from the Black Hills of South Dakota and the deserts of the Southwest.³⁰ Full of rich natural textures and colors from such geological substances, Dobberstein's first grotto stands thirty-five feet tall and features at its center a white marble statue of the Virgin and Child. Arches within the structure are adorned with white and rose quartz and the dome encrusted with shiny stones like mica or pyrite. Symbols of the Passion of Christ are included in stone on one apse while the apse opposite features the story of the Annunciation in stained glass. The elaborate nature and winding caves of religious grottoes are similar to Hannemann's maze-like structure. Some portions of the *Cathedral* are also built in a similar fashion to grottoes, such as the throne and the stairs, both of which feature cement with stones and items embedded within the poured concrete.

²⁸ John Beardsley, *Gardens of Revelation*, 101.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 102.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 104-5.

Alongside displays that are rooted in a communal religious tradition, personal visions of a spiritual nature have motivated several backyard creators. Perhaps the most well known of such artists is Howard Finster (1916-2001), the Southern preacher who used his artwork to deliver God's message. His home and yard environment known as *Paradise Garden* (fig. 34) is situated on what was once on the outskirts of the northwestern Georgia woods. The property spans 2.5 acres of land. Beginning his garden in the 1960s as an extension of his preaching, Finster formed concrete mounds ornamented with found objects, broken glass, mirrors, and ceramics to build many of the garden's structures. In addition, Finster's garden included many hand-painted signs declaring religious messages. Finster transformed a church at the north edge of his property into a three-tiered chapel with a round tower and a metal spire, dubbing the structure the World's Folk Art Church as an expression of ministering through art. Concrete paths with embedded glass, tile, and even tools wind through the garden, drawing attention to Finster's constructions made from bottles and mirrors and towers of hubcaps and bicycle wheels. The garden utilizes many of the materials found in the yards of African American vernacular artists and that of Hannemann. The type of scrap material used for all of these environments is strikingly similar. The distinguishing feature is Finster's motivation: he used the scrapped creations of humankind to glorify God.³¹ According to Finster, God validated his use of scrap materials as a challenge to see what he could make with what others threw out.³²

³¹ Ibid., 77.

³² Ibid., 78.

Like African American vernacular art and communally concerned yard art, most religiously inspired environments aim to activate the community. As with Finster's garden, the community becomes the congregation. Neighbors rally to prayer through Catholic yard shrines and grottos, which allow the community a space for personal spiritual journey through biblical stories. And as Beardsley contends, visionary artists acknowledge something out of whack with society, aiming to convey a message that rectifies what is wrong with the world.³³ Religiously motivated yard art is less concerned with heritage or history than the health of the collective and individual soul. Yet all of the environments, with varying motives of collective concern or individual expression, share the act of utilizing recycled goods in addition to natural objects.

Though the yards of Finster and Hannemann with their towering architectural forms and piecemeal construction seem more parallel than any other environment yet described, Hannemann's motives still differ from religiously motivated yard art. While the structure is a "cathedral", it is in no way built out of a religious tradition or intended to be a structure for religious preaching or conversion; any religious nature of the *Cathedral* is a byproduct of its use as a space for visitors to hold sacred and Hannemann's general acknowledgement of spirituality that is not an endorsement of specific religious practice or doctrine.

Personal Expression

In many ways, Hannemann's *Cathedral of Junk* best fits in the category of personal expression. Unfettered by social concern, the yard art that does not fit into the previous categories plots a map of personal expression unguided by heritage or religious

³³ Ibid., 68

affiliation. Often belittling the grandeur of their own structures as a hobby, these artists are what Blasdel calls “grass-roots”. Few common denominators can be found among them. While they may be set in spaces accessible to the public, the motives behind the yards are more personal in nature. Sometimes undivulged and sometimes unknown, motivation for this type of yard art can only be categorized as personal expression. Examples of this type of yard art include the Orange Show, the Heidelberg Project, Watts Towers, Bottle Village, and the mirror house of Clarence Schmidt.

At the age of ten or eleven, Hannemann saw an after-school special on Watt’s Towers in Los Angeles (fig. 35). Built by self-taught artist Simon Rodia (1879-1965), the structure played an important role in Hanneman’s creative imagination. He remembers thinking, “wow, wouldn’t it be cool to do something like that?”³⁴ Citing only the desire to amend his past, Rodia spent thirty-three years (1921-54) working on his towering structure, which he located on a triangular plot of land (about 1/10th of an acre) in what was then the outskirts of Los Angeles and what is now one of the city’s districts within South Los Angeles. The Watts neighborhood is known by the 1965 Watts Riots and Rodia’s towers. Featuring three large spindly, web-like towers of steel rods covered in cement, the tallest tower reaches a height of nearly 100 feet.³⁵ The towers are not alone; the environment includes a mosaic boat, a fountain, a gazebo, and other small spires.

³⁴ “CRX American Road Trip: Cathedral of Junk in Austin, TX,” CRXRoadTrip, November 5, 2012, accessed January 2, 2013, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DI0nz6zeoPc&feature=share>.

³⁵ Beardsley, *Gardens of Revelation*, 165.

Rodia's stylistic creations are reminiscent of the architectural forms of Antonio Gaudi's Sagrada Familia in Barcelona. Like the towering forms found in Spain, the steel armature of the Towers is covered in cement and has broken glass and colorful ceramic pieces pressed into it. It is similar in the nature of its construction to several contemporary folk art environments, such as the Dickeyville Grotto in Wisconsin where he is said to have worked. These environments share the construction method of stones, rocks, and glass embedding into concrete walls. Aware of his influences, he once told an interviewer that his towers were inspired by architecture he had seen in Italy.³⁶ Watts Towers became one of the most well known yard environments, one which influenced Hannemann from a young age.

Widely referenced in discussion of yard environments, *Bottle Village* is a complex of buildings constructed with cement and glass bottles (fig. 36). Its creator Tressa Prisbrey (1896-1988) began building a place to store her pencil collection in Simi Valley, California in 1955.³⁷ The environment grew into 13 structures on a 1/3 acre of land. Other collections of shells, dolls, and vessels are housed in the structures, such as the Shell House, the Doll Shrine, and a room called Cleopatra's Bedroom. According to Prisbrey's last count, Bottle Village features one million fifteen bottles and six hundred dolls. Prisbrey attributed her collection mania to a hobby. "If you think you are slipping, just get a hobby that will take your mind off of how you feel and give yourself something to look forward to," she said. For Prisbrey, her environment took her mind off the death

³⁶ Lesle Umberger, *Sublime Spaces and Visionary Worlds: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists* (Princeton Architectural Press, 2007), 99.

³⁷ At the time, her pencil collection numbered 10,000.

of six of her seven children during her lifetime.³⁸ Prisbrey continued to make art throughout the tragedies of death that regularly punctuated her adult life until at the age of 86 she could no longer work at *Bottle Village* due to failing health, moved to live with her surviving child, and died six years later in 1988.

Featured in Blasdel's photo essay, Queens native Clarence Schmidt (1897-1978) built a structure he called "Journey's End" (fig. 37). He expanded a one-room log cabin called the "Inner Sanctum" into the surrounding gardens called "Mirrored Hope". The house on Ohayo Mountain near Woodstock, New York, was left to Schmidt in 1928 and at the age of 31 he convinced his wife to move to the property and built a house in a "Swiss Family Robinson" style using railroad ties alongside conventional building materials. He used tar covered in aluminum foil to create an addition to the house. The structure became an elaborate seven-story labyrinth of windows, balconies, rooftops, and passageways, punctuated by mirrors and gardens. His creation was destroyed in 1968 by a fire. Schmidt rebuilt on the land, calling the second house, consisting of three rooms over a station wagon, "Mark II". The walls were decorated with tree branches covered in aluminum foil. In 1971, it, too, was destroyed by fire. After sleeping wherever he could, Schmidt moved to Kensington, New York, where he was put in a state hospital for observation. Schmidt died in 1978 and the site eventually disappeared due to vandalism.³⁹

³⁸ Beardsley, *Gardens of Revelation*, 159.

³⁹ Historical Society of Woodstock, "Clarence Schmidt," accessed October 10, 2012, www.historicalsocietyofwoodstock.org/clarence-schmidt.

Schmidt considered his environment to benefit society, though he never stated precisely how the mirror house contributed to the community at large.⁴⁰ He told Blasdel, “There is nothing else like it in the world.”⁴¹ His statement indicates a sense of pride in his creation and its use to validate self-worth. As outsider art scholar Roger Cardinal wrote, “The outsider site is always a reflection, even a projection of the creative individual—a self-portrait, or monument to selfhood.”⁴² Schmidt’s environment most clearly illustrates the extension of the self into external space without citing additional motives.

The environments constructed by Rodia, Prisbrey, and Schmidt are each unique. Eccentricities of personal expression distinguish these yards from those spurred by a collective concern, religious affiliation, or a distinct heritage. Yet strong similarities of self-expression and resourcefulness exist throughout all categories of yard art. When writing about *The Orange Show*, author Joseph F. Lomax notes, “With no sense of the fine art tradition and its media, self-taught artists develop independent preferences based on what they see and find around them in their immediate daily environments.”⁴³ Making do with available materials relates to a rural self-reliance associated with low economic

⁴⁰ Gregg Blasdel and Bill Lipke, “Clarence Schmidt: Toward Journey’s End” in *Naives and Visionaries* (Minneapolis: Walker Art Center, 1974), 51.

⁴¹ Blasdel, “The Grass Roots Artist”, 24-41.

⁴² Roger Cardinal, “The vulnerability of outsider architecture,” *Southern Quarterly* 39 (2000-2001), 169-186.

⁴³ Beardsley, *Gardens of Revelation*, 57.

status.⁴⁴ Likewise, tools to construct yard art are generally household items and readily available. Cast-off materials, as well as the self-taught sensibility of their makers link the categories of yard art.

The proliferation of these self-taught and environmentally specific artworks called yard art must be considered within the context of art history. With tendencies and messages as intricate as folk art and fine art, yard art forms a distinct category of cultural and individual self-expression. Paul Arnett states, "One may safely hypothesize that yard projects and their makers outnumber "conventional" artists by one hundred (or one thousand) to one."⁴⁵ While the mathematics of Arnett's statement may be an exaggeration, the examples discussed in this paper are only a small portion of the growing catalog of known yard environments.

Prisbrey used her village in much the same fashion that Hannemann uses his *Cathedral* to keep his mind from depression. The act of creation and personal expression has significant therapeutic properties for each maker. The correlation of the creative process to the grieving process has been noted by Michael Owen Jones in his book *The Hand Made Object and Its Maker*, saying that the two processes "have much in common and sometimes are almost one; [each include] the search for structure and order, and the reaffirmation of self."⁴⁶ Hannemann leaves much of his environment unexplained in

⁴⁴ Ibid., 57.

⁴⁵ Arnett, *Souls Grown Deep*, 2.

⁴⁶ Verni Greenfield, "Silk Purses from Sows' Ears," in Ward, Daniel Franklin, *Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984), 139.

much the same fashion as Schmidt, though with prompting, Hannemann can be quite articulate and demonstrates that over many years of visitor queries he has developed a more thorough understanding of his process and motivation.

Drawing visual inspiration from other personally expressive yards, and by proxy from the Mexican-American housescaping that exist within Austin, *The Cathedral of Junk* follows the ideals of grass-roots art environments as defined by Carl Magnuson as the “expression of individuals who do not satisfy the aesthetic standards of any clearly defined audience. These artists seem to come from nowhere, producing art that appears to lack precedent.”⁴⁷ Though it shares elements of all yard art categories, the *Cathedral* is built out of no prior ethnic tradition, does not derive from a religious cause, and carries no overt or intentional political, communal, or patriotic message. The *Cathedral of Junk* shares a little with each category of yard art, yet it clearly belongs to the category of personal expression due to Hannemann’s very personal motivation that has formed a complex amalgamation of junk into a distinctive piece of culturally relevant yard art.

⁴⁷ Carl Magnuson. “Aesthetics and Grassroots Art: A folklorist’s Perspective,” ed. Barbara Brackman and Cathy Dwigans. *Backyard Visionaries* (Lawrence: the University Press of Kansas, 1999), 5.

CHAPTER THREE: The Use and Meaning of Junk as Material

As media theorist Marshall McLuhan once said, "The medium is the message." For Vince Hannemann, the message is about junk, or the accumulated waste of consumer goods. Anthropologist Mary Douglas and economist Baron Isherwood write, "Consumer goods have a significance that goes beyond their utilitarian character and commercial value. This significance rests largely in their ability to carry and communicate cultural meaning."¹ Regardless of the trade value of an object, each item retains a message that may include its value along with its cultural associations. In reference to the *Cathedral of Junk*, its many objects retain meanings that are encoded by the objects' original commoditized function.

Subjectivity of Object Meaning

Douglas and Isherwood continue, "Goods are an opportunity to make cultur[al] material. Like any other species of material culture, goods allow individuals to discriminate visually among culturally specified categories by encoding these categories in the form of a set of material distinctions."² The capacity of an object to retain meaning is due to its subjective quality of appealing to one person while repulsing another. Therefore, the interaction of the viewer to the individual objects that make up the *Cathedral of Junk* is case by case. A good's singular meaning reacts variably with each individual. Douglas and Isherwood tell us, "The choice of goods

¹ Grant McCracken, "Culture and Consumption," *The Journal of Consumer Research*, 13, no. 1 (1986), 71.

² *Ibid.*, 73.

continually creates certain patterns of discrimination, overlaying or reinforcing others. Goods are the visible parts of culture.” The authors contend that goods are anchored to human social purposes.³ Those human purposes include identity and self-creation, constructed by acquisition of goods. Likewise, rejection or acceptance of a type of object solidifies a certain facet of one’s identity. The goods rejected and adopted into the *Cathedral*, then, signify a certain part of culture that has been rejected and discarded.

Goods carry cultural categories that are "elective" (created by the consumer) and subject to rapid change.⁴ Meaning begins in the cultural realm and must be transferred to the goods and objects.⁵ The meaning of the bicycle did not begin at the factory; instead the principle of luxury began within the class distinction of the onlooker and was then transferred to the objects possessed by each party. Each of the objects used and embedded into the *Cathedral of Junk*, then, has its own elective meaning, and carries that meaning into the piece as a whole. Elective meanings are interpreted by each viewer of the *Cathedral*, and therefore are somewhat subjective.

Another example of the subjectivity of objects due to imbedded meaning can be seen in the anecdote of the Hollywood film *The Gods Must Be Crazy* in which the non-Westerners view the excess disposal of goods from the West as a foreign object that has

³ Joanne Cubbs and Eugene W. Metcalt, Jr., "Sci-Fi Machines and Bottle-Cap Kings" in *Recycled Re-Seen*, Eds. Charlene Cerny and Suzanne Seriff (New York: Harry N. Abrams, Inc., 1996), 48.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 74.

limitless potential for practical use.⁶ The activity of generating trash objects can be described by the term "throwaway spirit", which was coined by American sociologist Vance Packard and encompasses the mentality of the West that discards functional goods when no longer convenient. The Westerners who discarded the Coca-Cola bottle viewed it as useless – old, non-functional, and unwanted trash.

Yet for many undeveloped nations, the objects retain potential value. For instance, after conquest European goods were viewed by the indigenous peoples as symbols of wealth and prestige.⁷ Those using the Coca-Cola bottle in *The Gods Must Be Crazy* found in European goods an inherent meaning of Western wealth and status. To the Western discarders, the meaning of the object was exhausted; the throwaways no longer had value. As Western junk spreads to other nations, the prevalence and use of recycled objects signal the ubiquitous intrusion of material modernity in even the remotest corners of the globe.⁸ As Westerners continue to embrace the trend of planned obsolescence in manufacture and the purchase of the next big thing, more fully functional used objects are discarded.⁹

Many non-Western cultures embrace leftovers as potential material for creation. In Dakar, Senegal, an artisan entrepreneur uses misprinted sheet metal to create briefcases. In Mexico, old license plates are turned into dustpans.¹⁰ Native inhabitants

⁶ Cerny and Seriff, *Recycled Re-Seen*, 9.

⁷ Ibid., 142.

⁸ Ibid., 12.

⁹ Ibid., 16.

¹⁰ Ibid., 14.

of Trinidad and Tobago use old barrels of rum and sugarcane as drums.¹¹ For these cultures, the meaning in the goods was not spent; instead, the meaning of wealth (the discarded object coming from a wealthy place) added to its potential value as a practical and artistic material. For instance, the visitor from a South American country to Hannemann's *Cathedral* was astonished at the amount of material labeled as junk that was available for use in the yard. In his country, those objects would not have been thrown out in the first place or would have been repurposed.

Because recycled materials are often viewed by the Western world as trash, culture often assigns the same negative meaning to the art created by such materials. Anthropologists Schildkrout and Pido state, "It is all too easy to think that the people who use industrial products in novel ways either don't understand the original meanings of the objects or materials or are showing blind admiration for industrial culture by using its debris to cope with their own relative adversity." Yet Schildkrout and Pido claim both of these assumptions are wrong, saying, "Recyclers inevitably have their own ideas about what is useful, appropriate, and beautiful." The ideas of beauty and use within the *Cathedral of Junk* are certainly in line with recyclers and in sharp contrast to standard construction and the wider lifespan of consumer goods.

The category of an object, good or junk, can determine how a person acts toward the object, or the way one acts toward an object can determine its definition. Rubbish theory places objects in three categories: valuable, valueless, and negatively valued. In this model, categories are socially constructed, possess temporal and aesthetic qualities,

¹¹ John Nunley. "The Beat Goes On: Recycling and Improvisation in the Steel Bands of Trinidad and Tobago," in Cerny and Seriff, 131.

and exist on a functional continuum. Durable objects are higher in value. Possibly considered without value, prized acquisitions of the artists using found objects often have little monetary worth. If the objects within the *Cathedral of Junk* were removed and examined, majority of the rusted objects would be called trash and other shiny objects and toys considered worthless knick-knacks. Trash objects that possess potential value for artists are neglected by the general public. Once these objects are pieced into a large cathedral, the junk attains a new level of value as art.

According to Wittgenstein, "The meaning is the use," while T. Segerstedt counters, "meaning is always a presupposition of function."¹² Both philosophers are correct. For art, the use of the object determines the newly constructed meaning, which presupposes function, but the function of the objects used to create the new object of art may influence the meaning by way of previously embedded notions. For example, if a found object is used as art, it takes on the meaning of the new artwork to which it contributes. In turn, the object also contributes its previous meaning to the art, causing the artwork to be embedded with the found object's meaning.

Within the West, views differ on the object's retention of meaning. One viewpoint is to utilize the object in art as a part of the artwork that has its own meaning rather than projecting the object's symbolic meaning onto the art. Others, however, consider the metaphysical connotations of the object and its influence on the new piece of art. Each view acknowledges the loaded nature of goods; it is simply a matter of which view is adopted to determine how many layers of meaning are acknowledged in an object. This explains the very personal and variable nature of the experience within

¹² Joseph Kosuth, *Art After Philosophy and After* (MIT Press, 1991), 15.

the *Cathedral of Junk*. While one viewer experiences object-induced nostalgia, a partner viewer may experience awe at the aesthetic transformation of objects he or she views as trash.

The Found Object in Art

As established by the previous examples and theories, each object contains a meaning (an envelope is meant to send a letter) and carries with it cultural connotations (an envelope is an older format of transmitting information as opposed to e-mail, making the envelope a more archaic object with some bits of nostalgia for old fashioned ways of communication). When objects are combined, meanings of each object create a new meaning for the newly assembled object. This is the act of creativity, combining and recombining objects, thus combining and recombining meanings. Yard art is an assemblage of meanings combined to create a new message; it follows the tradition of the found object in art history.

According to art historian E. H. Gombrich, "The artist, clearly, can render only what his tool and his medium are capable of rendering. His technique restricts his freedom of choice."¹³ While the use of found materials may require the use of objects with pre-coded meanings, it frees the artist from using only one medium as dictated by the art historical canon (paintings are made with paint and sculptures with stone or metal). Introduction of the found object into fine art forced acceptance of the multidisciplinary and destroyed the strict parameters of painting and sculpture.

¹³ E.H Gombrich, "Truth and the Stereotype," *Art and Illusion* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1989), 63.

Duchamp questioned the underlying tenets of existing art practices through the use of atypical and everyday materials. He recognized his readymades as his most important single idea.¹⁴ Previously craftsmen had used found objects, like the use of scraps for the domestic patchwork quilt, but the artform was regarded as old-fashioned and relegated to folk artists. Duchamp's readymade championed the category of "art in general" and the found object seeped into high art, validating everything from appropriated consumer goods to quilts as art. It is this precedent that allowed modern and contemporary artists to utilize discarded materials in artworks and ultimately what allows the *Cathedral of Junk* to be considered a work of art.

After Duchamp, a host of artists began working with found objects. Robert Rauschenberg's combines are an obvious use of basic recycled materials within assemblages. Surrealism embraced found objects to express the absurdity in its ideas, such as Joan Miro's "Object" (1936), which included a nonsensical pairing of a stuffed parrot and a stuffed silk stocking, while Meret Oppenheim's "Object" of the same year applied fur to a domestic cup, spoon, and saucer. Shortly thereafter, Joseph Cornell assembled many box collages with small found objects and images, a fusion of Surrealism and Dada. Dadaists used found art as a means of protest against established norms. It was a cult of satire and cultural critique, easily expressed using objects that carried embedded cultural meanings of the contemporary society. In much the same way, the *Cathedral of Junk* utilizes cultural remnants as a medium for commentary

¹⁴ Thomas Girst. "(Ab)using Marcel Duchamp," *Aftershock: The Legacy of the Readymade in Post-War and Contemporary American Art*, (New York: Dickinson Roudell, Inc., 2003), 18.

within its construction. Dada's commentary on culture could be easily achieved by using objects found within that culture; objects used carried pre-established meanings relevant to contemporary culture. The *Cathedral*'s significance through use of encoded cultural material functions in the same manner, though Hannemann is less vocal regarding such intentions than were the Dadaists.

Several decades later, Ed Kienholz (1927-1994) consistently commented on the social state of American culture during the tumultuous Vietnam War era by using discarded materials. "The Portable War Memorial" of 1968 critiques the Vietnam War with a tableaux of soldiers erecting a flag replicating Rosenthal's famous photograph from Iwo Jima, set in an American diner made of found objects. Kienholz used materials embedded with meaning such as the American flag, which stands for solidarity and patriotism, and the diner, which embodies the quintessential middle-class American lifestyle of consumption. By setting the memorial in a diner, Kienholz relocates the war and American conquest to the realm of consumption. The piece was described as "the portable war memorial for a portable war machine."¹⁵ The way Hannemann has set his construction as a destination to be consumed within the wider cultural realm of consumption is similar to Kienholz's placement of American commentary in a ubiquitous American spot. Both Kienholz and Hannemann utilized context and placement of artwork in order to critique the culture that surrounds and is the subject of the artworks, though Kienholz's work was overtly political while Hannemann's message is embedded in the collection of goods that make up the

¹⁵ Walter Hopps, ed., *Kienholz: A Retrospective* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1996), 135.

artwork.

In order to contextualize these cultural comments, junk objects of the day are used in both pieces. Artists using found objects tend to see objects in terms of potential value rather than objects as their consumer-encoded interpretation. Cultural connotations are considered, such as the significance of fur when put onto a teacup or the meaning of a flag as a significant symbol of a country, but value is not determined by new or old. Each object contains layers of coded meaning, beginning with the primary subject matter, both factual and expressional, the secondary subject, and the content.¹⁶ Most relative is the content, which is given by the use of the object or idea within culture. In most circumstances, Western society refers to objects by way of the content. For example, a cookie tin is a holder of cookies. When the cookies are consumed, the tin is no longer of value as its intended meaning. Thus it must be discarded or repurposed, most likely the former.

An artist recycling the tin, however, would utilize the object's prior meaning in a new way. "Like collage in art or quotation in literature, the recycled object carries a kind of 'memory' of its prior existence. Recycling always implies a stance toward time - between the past and present - and often a perspective on culture - one's own and others."¹⁷ The history of the found object allows its finder to interact with past civilization as well as with present society.¹⁸ In the *Cathedral of Junk*, the junk objects

¹⁶ Erwin Panofsky, *Meaning in the Visual Arts* (New York: Penguin, 1970), 7.

¹⁷ Cerny and Seriff, *Recycled Re-Seen*, 10.

¹⁸ Paul Camic, "From Trashed to Treasured: A grounded theory of analysis of the found object", *Psychology of Aesthetics Creativity and the Arts* 4 (2): 81-92.

certainly evoke a time-based nostalgia, noted by several visitors, as well as reference contemporary culture through present-day goods.

With use of the everyday found object the artist increases the interpretive accessibility of the art. Commonly recognized goods, objects recycled into art, possess the means to make the artwork readable to a wider audience. For this reason, the *Cathedral of Junk* appeals to a world-wide audience made up of many economic classes. The question of recycled materials as valid for art does arise in tandem with the accessible nature of common goods. Traditionally art materials were given a higher value than common goods. Recycled goods as art questions the hierarchy of high art. Based on Duchamp and the art following his influence, the everyday object can now stand up to such public skepticism. By its use in an artwork, the object achieves an additional status, with its esthetic qualities, that it did not have before. The formerly discarded and now found objects are "emancipated from the significance attached to them by functionality, objects are now valued, revalued, and endlessly transformed in a dynamic, give-and-take process of consumption. The meanings of the goods are established and reestablished with each exchange."¹⁹

Contemporary artists increasingly turn to found objects. For example, Guerra de la Paz, a team of Cuban-born artists working in Miami since 1996, make work about the history of debris as a sort of archeology using discards from the Pepe business, the industry that buys secondhand goods for resale in Haiti. Their website states,

Our work is based on a combination of traditional disciplines and experimentation with dimension and the use of unconventional materials. It is inspired by an essential familiarity with the ready-made and the archeological

¹⁹ Cerny and Serrif, *Recycled Re-Seen*, 48.

qualities that found objects possess. [Our work is] encapsulating an energy that reveals underlying meanings and depicts the significance of mass-produced refuse on our society.²⁰

The work is inspired and informed by discarded fabrics without directly commenting on the act of discarding the fabric. Instead, the team uses discards to create shells of figures and objects that symbolize a life from the death of discard. In this way, the material informs the work without determining the work.

IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION

The recycled object is a signifier of culture as a whole; what is thrown away indicates what is valued and valueless to the population. Goods are also representative of the individual. Within a cultural context, objects can be used to foster identity and function as extensions of the self. The *Cathedral of Junk* is an extension of Vince Hannemann, and as the site and its maker become more well-known, the two are more fully intertwined. The search for things, collecting them, and the need to embellish and make the ordinary special have been essential parts of the evolutionary process of human development; for Hannemann this process began through collecting and rearranging objects during his teenage years in New Mexico and has remained the activity of stability through all parts of young adult formation and adulthood.

Recycling objects is an obvious metaphor for rebirth. The act of reusing objects in art gives new life to the object and a sense of rebirth to the person engaged in the creative process as a byproduct of transforming the junk into objects of value. Phases in the use of found materials include discovery of the objects, enjoyment of the

²⁰ Guerra de la Paz [official website], accessed March 13, 2011, <http://www.guerradelapaz.com>.

transformative process, and the outcome of the metamorphosis. People who make use of found objects most often do so initially in response to what is evoked by the object's physical and aesthetic properties. Equally important for some is the hunt for the object. Hannemann sees potential value in his junk objects and seeks to incorporate them into the larger structure of reuse in his backyard. Therein, an appreciation and discovery of the object lead to its transformation.

Contemporary artist Matthew Cusick has an admitted inclination to collect stemming from a long family history of hoarding:

“Repurposing is an alternative to hoarding. It is also an alternative to consuming and creating waste. But it is also a form of appropriation, of taking from what surrounds you and making it your own. This process of transferring ownership can be the best way to preserve something that might otherwise disappear.”²¹

Cusick accurately describes the benefits of using recycled materials for creation: reducing waste, giving objects new meaning, preservation of material history otherwise lost, and creating identity through use of goods. The use of found objects does not stop with necessity; even if the process of reuse begins out of economic need, the outcome acknowledges the benefits for the artist as detailed by Cusick.

Joanne Cubbs and Eugene Metcalf write, "There have always been found-object bricoleurs...living in a disposable, waste-burdened, and socially atomized culture, we are called upon by ecological necessity to reconsider not only the manner in which we use and value things but the way we view ourselves and each other."²² Slowing down

²¹ Abby Wilcox, "Rising Star Matthew Cusick", *Live Fast*, April 10, 2011,

<<http://livefastmag.com/2011/04/rising-star-matthew-cusick/>>, access date April 24, 2011.

²² Cubbs and Metcalf, Cerny, 59.

consumption is a strong ecological reason to use found materials. Environmental conservationists are dismayed by the frequent discarding of metals and other reusable goods. Artistic reuse is a personal method of intervention against rapid waste. Kienholz, for instance, grew up with a pragmatic family that did not throw out items until fully unusable. After moving to Los Angeles, he began to repair thrown out furniture, astonished at the amount of things people threw out.²³ He began to use found materials as time management; the less money he spend on food and art supplies, the more time he could spend making art.²⁴ The Kienholz tableaux show the discards of humanity in both subject matter and materials. The tableaux access the distant past through recollection, utilizing the found object to elicit those memories. The *Cathedral of Junk*, too, is a reflection of humankind through the embedded meaning and history of the materials used and the representation of a culture that discards such a numerous amount of materials.

Entire cultural habits are based on the economic need to reuse materials, cultivating habits that contribute to waste reduction. Turner notes that Mexican-American yard art is inherited from a tradition of economic need, "Tejano folk arts are steeped in and arise from the culture of necessity." The aesthetic is linked to cultural strategies of survival. This has created an ease of recycling.²⁵ Recycling can be considered a "farmer fix it" method of making do with what is available, yet it involves significant creative conception for the inceptors of yard art. An exploration of the yard art of the Texas-Mexican community geographically relevant to the *Cathedral of Junk*

²³ Hopps, 27.

²⁴ Verni Greenfield, *Making Do or Making Art* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1986), 15.

²⁵ Cerny, 68.

shows a display of everyday recycled arts. The propensity of Mexican-Americans toward visual communication tends to manifest in elaborate yard displays, specifically the yards of Texas border towns.²⁶ Turner distinguishes this act of yard decoration, which includes used tires, figurines, fake flowers, and other items of consumer society, as identity-production rather than kitsch. "Kitsch offers little more than a vicarious identity..." such as the appropriated identity in Tex-Mex restaurants, "But, in direct contrast, yard works are intimately attached to members of communities as representations of cultural tradition and values."²⁷ Exemplary of this cultural identity are Mexican-American shrines in the area, as well as African American vernacular works and communally-concerned displays all over the country. Examination of the *Cathedral of Junk* under the same token reflects a cultural identity of American consumption represented by the multiplicity of discards; the *Cathedral* is the commentary on the wastefulness of its culture.

Whether functioning as identity creation, conservation based on principle, economic need, or aesthetic choice, found objects create a unique and multi-layered language of communication for high and low art. At times questioned for validity, found objects have become a viable and frequently accepted art form since 1913, making junk within Hannemann's yard a valid expression of artistic effort. Engaging in cultural critique and establishing new social meanings and identities through reuse, found object art spans its traditional origins of domestic craft into contemporary art space. Perhaps

²⁶ Kay Turner, "Hacer Cosas: Recycled Arts and the Making of Identity in Texas-Mexican Culture," Cerny and Seriff, 61.

²⁷ Ibid., 65.

more than the pure mediums of paint or bronze, the assemblage of materials demands the message of meaning be embedded within the medium itself. In particular, the *Cathedral of Junk* holds a multi-layered message within each individual object and the structure of reused materials as a whole; each item holds a history while the whole speaks to the contemporary.

CHAPTER 4

THE CATHEDRAL OF JUNK AS A CRITIQUE OF CULTURAL CONSUMPTION

Carl Jung wrote on the meaning of art:

“We have talked so much about the meaning of works of art that one can hardly suppress a doubt as to whether art really ‘means’ anything at all. Perhaps art has no ‘meaning,’ at least not as we understand meaning. Perhaps it is like nature, which simply *is* and ‘means’ nothing beyond that. Is ‘meaning’ necessarily more than mere interpretation – an interpretation secreted into something by an intellect hungry for meaning? ...We must interpret, we must find meaning in things, otherwise we would be quite unable to think about them.”²⁸

The *Cathedral of Junk*, to some viewers, may have no “meaning” beyond what Hannemann espouses as untamed creative urge. Yet the human mind cannot stop with a meaningless interpretation for something outside the normality of artmaking. And so, the “million dollar question” is asked to Hannemann from almost every visitor – “Why did you make this?”

While Hannemann does not explicitly preach the message of reuse, his *Cathedral* is a visible reminder that contemporary society is a consumptive one. Juliet Schor wrote, “In contemporary American culture, consuming is as authentic as it gets.”²⁹ Permission to consume, based out of the American right to happiness (or the right to get what one wants), reflects authentic Americanism. This ideology is known as conspicuous consumption, defined as using a significant amount of time and money on leisure activities and luxury items.³⁰ Post World War II, identity creation through consumption

²⁸ Jung, 78.

²⁹ Juliet Schor. “The New Politics of Consumption,” *Boston Review* 24 (3-4): 4-9, Summer 1999.

³⁰ This term was coined by Thorstein Veblen in 1899. Himadri Roy Chaudhuri and Sitanath Majumdar. “Of Diamonds and Desires: Understanding Conspicuous Consumption from a

seeped into culture as a completely normal system. The decades surrounding Andy Warhol, the 1960s-80s, are exemplary of this character-creation through goods in order to compose a lifestyle. Consuming was then, and is now, as American as it gets. By the 1980s and 90s “consumption had become a democratic exercise in which anybody could be anything merely by donning the right outfit or car or style.”³¹

With consumption as a right, the question of what to consume becomes a choice for each individual. French poststructuralist Jean Baudrillard theorizes that all objects signify something within culture, thus espousing that all consumed goods carry a relative meaning; the meaning is changeable according to contemporary context, but each good carries a current meaning. Baudrillard’s theory is closely aligned with the idea of objecthood, which considers the idea of the object in addition to its shape. Likewise, Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood state that goods are needed for making visible and stable categories of culture.³² In order to solidify one’s place in society, identity is defined by the distinctions carried in the goods one consumes and the objects one owns. It is the remnants of disposable culture that make up the *Cathedral of Junk*, commenting on the proliferation of all such consumer activity.

Contemporary Marketing Perspective.” *Academy of Marketing Science Review* (11) 2006.

<http://www.amsreview.org/articles/chaudhuri08-2005.pdf>

³¹ Holt and Schor, xvii.

³² Mary Douglas and Baron Isherwood. *The World of Goods*. Norton, New York (1979), 59.

Schor termed “competitive consumption” the idea that spending is driven by competitive process or a resounding idea of “keeping up with the Joneses”.³³ She goes on to state that this competitive consumption has jeopardized the quality of life, making culture a constant competition. In order to maintain a certain social status consumption is necessary, thus perpetuating the notion of consumption as a vehicle for the right to a “decent” standard of living. Through goods-based identity construction, Western society engages in consumption motivated by social competition.³⁴ If goods define an individual’s place in culture, what is consumed becomes very important. As a result, advertising is used to match goods with cultural meanings in order to make a product more culturally coveted. The marketer must choose the most desirable meanings to be matched with the goods for sale in order to increase profit. “Through advertising, old and new goods continually give up old meanings and take on new ones,” McCracken states.³⁵

To increase sales, many producers also adopt the practice of planned obsolescence. Proposed by Vance Packard as a measure to end the economic depression of the early 20th century, planned obsolescence gives a product a lifespan. After the pre-determined lifespan, a new version is released to render the original version old and useless, and thus disposable. Hence, the throwaway culture is perpetuated by planned obsolescence. The upsides to this practice are retention of manufacture jobs and steady

³³ Schor, Juliet B. “Towards a New Politics of Consumption” (1999). *The Consumer Society Reader*. The New Press, 2000, 446.

³⁴ Veblen (1899) as cited in Richard Wilk “Consuming Morality”.

³⁵ McCracken, 76.

profit for the manufacturing companies.³⁶ On the consumer end, disposable items increase.³⁷ And the more disposable goods consumed, the more waste is generated. Increasingly, municipal waste mirrors the concept of a “throwaway society” with landfills as treasure troves for broken, used up, or disposed materials. Disposable culture only instigates further consumption to replace the thrown out object; a cycle of conspicuous consumption then grows exponentially.

In society, signs of obsolescence become a social liability. Essayist Daniel Harris elaborates by saying, “to ensure that consumers constantly replace their possessions, manufacturers have stigmatized the worn and out-of-date and in the process have produced a world that, out of psychological necessity, purges the environment of objects that betray use, creating a timeless landscape from which all signs of history, of wear and tear, have been eerily eradicated.”³⁸ Harris speaks of the prevalence of shiny new goods, furniture and appliances in opposition to retaining fully functional but aged goods, furniture and appliances. Used possessions replaced by the shiny and the new provide the junk material that is used to build Hannemann’s *Cathedral of Junk*, such as the typewriter in the wall of the *Cathedral* that has now been replaced by its owner for a desktop computer, a doll outgrown by a child, or the table full of rotary telephones now replaced by mobile and cordless phones.

³⁶ Bernard London. “Ending the Depression Through Planned Obsolescence.” 1932.

<http://babel.hathitrust.org/cgi/pt?id=wu.89097035273;seq=11;view=1up;num=7> accessed 3 January 2013.

³⁷ Ritzer, 73.

³⁸ Daniel Harris. *Cute, Quaint, Hungry and Romantic* (Cambridge, Da Capo Press, 2001), 36.

This pattern of consumption gave rise to shopping centers and shopping malls, infrastructure that peaked in the 1990s. Malls became a haven, and perhaps a temple, for the consumption of goods. Sociologist George Ritzer espoused the theory of consumerism as a religion by saying, “The new means of consumption can be seen as ‘cathedrals of consumption’—that is, they are structured, often successfully, to have an enchanted, sometimes even sacred, religious character.”³⁹ He further defines the term ‘cathedrals of consumption’ by saying the spaces of consumptive activity such as malls, destinations, and even the alluring products themselves have enchanted, sacred, and even a religious quality for some.⁴⁰

Cathedrals of consumption are so alluring that it is not uncommon for the destination to be sought out as a sole purpose of visitation or pleasure.⁴¹ Take for example the Mall of America in Bloomington, Minn. Near an international mid-continental hub, the four-story mall boasts an indoor theme park, its small share of Disney ventures (a Disney store and a Rainforest Café), LegoLand and 40 million visitors annually.⁴² The mall itself acts as a tourist destination to which shoppers make a pilgrimage as if the Mall of America were a sacred temple.

³⁹ George Ritzer. *Enchanting a disenchanted world: continuity and change in the cathedrals of consumption* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, 2010), 7.

⁴⁰ Ritzer, 8.

⁴¹ Ritzer, 41.

⁴² Appleton, Kate and Rich Beattie, Adrien Glover, Lyndsey Matthews, Joshua Pramis, and Ann Shiels. “World’s Most-Visited Tourist Attractions.” *Travel + Leisure*. Oct 2011.

The religious fervor surrounding the urge to buy is the cultural impetus for the *Cathedral of Junk*. While Ritzer is referring to shopping centers, malls, big box stores and the like as ‘cathedrals of consumption’, Hannemann has constructed a structure titled a cathedral that is the result of perpetual consumption. The *Cathedral of Junk* is a living, evolving anti-monument to the socially constructed categories of consumption and its throwaway behavior. Because consumption can function as a religious activity, it is appropriate that Hannemann’s anti-monument to consumption also alludes to a religious structure.

As anthropologist Richard Wilk suggests, consumption is so powerful because of its expression of a deeply rooted human desire: “The insatiable desire for goods is really a search for human wholeness.”⁴³ Parallel to religiously motivated search for human wholeness, consumption can be used to fill soul searching. Furthermore, the message to consume less can carry religious overtones. Deprivation and moderation of goods can be encouraged as a devotional practice. It is a dictation of do-good and moral responsibility, common to religious messages.⁴⁴ The statement’s inverse, to consume, can also be laden with subconscious religious desire for fulfillment.

After the acquisition of goods or a consumerist pilgrimage in the search for wholeness, much of what was consumed is quickly discarded. Within the trash, then, is

<http://www.travelandleisure.com/articles/worlds-most-visited-tourist-attractions>. accessed 29 Oct 2011.

⁴³ Richard Wilk “Consuming Morality,” 248

⁴⁴ Wilk, Richard Wilk. “Consuming Ourselves to Death,” in *Anthropology and Climate Change: from Encounters to Actions*, edited by Susan Crate, (Duke University Press., 2009), 268.

the evidence of conspicuous consumption and gross excess. In much the same way that Edward Kienholz actively engaged in cultural critique using his environments such as *The Portable War Memorial* or *Roxy's*, Vince Hannemann's *Cathedral of Junk* points directly at the practice of throwing out "used up" goods, of making "junk", and ultimately, of wasting.

As author Verni Greenfield states, the reuse of goods for artistic output transforms recycling into personal expression. She terms this use of scrap "aesthetic recycling" as opposed to the recycling that is cashing in cans at a recycling center for profit. In addition to the previously detailed reason for use of recycled materials out of necessity, Greenfield points out that using recycled goods minimizes the risk involved with creation.

"'Worthless' materials also lessen the risk of failure; if you 'ruin something, you've only lost time,'" she writes.⁴⁵

Using wasted and discarded material goods as his scrap material, Hannemann is adopting the pre-coded meaning of the goods' cultural history as well as the overall message of reuse that lessens waste. As a structure, the *Cathedral of Junk* espouses the idea that junk is not waste; through the structure, Hannemann declares used goods completely usable. The *Cathedral* as commentary on waste is not lost on astute observers. The *Austin Chronicle* named the environment as the Critic's pick for Best Shrine to Planned Obsolescence in 2006.⁴⁶ It is clear that Hannemann's creation goes

⁴⁵ Verni Greenfield, "Silk Purses from Sows' Ears," in Ward, Daniel Franklin, *Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984): 134-5.

⁴⁶ *The Austin Chronicle*

beyond a hobby or an enchanting tourist attraction. The *Cathedral of Junk* points to the prevalent and conspicuous waste in American culture and is on display for whomever wishes to view it.

Through examination of the *Cathedral*, its history, its place within art history, its materials and the significance of their use, the subjectivity of such yard art, and the cultural relevance of the work through anthropological and philosophical theories surrounding consumption, the *Cathedral of Junk* can be situated and interpreted in contemporary art history and society. It is a personal expression of yard art with a social meaning. Without initial intent to speak about the society in which he lives, Vince Hannemann has erected one giant heap of junk that critiques the habits of American culture.

POSTLUDE: PRESERVATION

John Maizels, founder of the periodical *Raw Vision*, speculates that the prevalence of yard art environments in the United States may be due to the cultural emphasis on individuality, “born out of a revolution and regard for individual liberty,” as well as fewer bureaucratic restrictions and less social control than other countries.⁴⁷ His book, *Fantasy Worlds*, illustrates the numerous instances of yard art environments in the United States and abroad. Recent interest in such environments has drawn attention to such privately held landscapes, including the *Cathedral of Junk*. Previously ignored by the folklorist and anthropologist due to the nature of yard art’s convoluted categorization and resistance to traditional form, yard environments were previously seen as isolated units. Largely thanks to the university artist and student of popular culture, yard environments have moved into the catalog of art history and popular culture movements.⁴⁸

With increased attention comes the question of the yard art’s longevity and preservation. “It’ll go on without me, I’m sure,” Hannemann said.⁴⁹ But the reality is the *Cathedral of Junk* might not go on without its maker and caretaker. In their *Smithsonian* article on backyard creators, Crease and Mann point out that in many cases the backyard environments only outlast their maker a few decades.⁵⁰ At times the environments are

⁴⁷ John Maizels and Deidi Von Schaewen. *Fantasy Worlds* (New York: Taschen, 1999), 16.

⁴⁸ Tom Stanley, “Two South Carolina Folk Environments,” in Ward, Daniel, *Personal Places: Perspectives on Informal Art Environments* (Bowling Green: Bowling Green State University Popular Press, 1984): 62.

⁴⁹ Evan Burns. “The Junk King.” 2012

⁵⁰ Crease and Mann

demolished while their maker is still alive, such as Lonnie Holley's first yard art environment that was acquired by the Birmingham Airport, or the fire that consumed two of Clarence Schmidt's houses. Jill Nokes noted that *The Cathedral of Junk* is one of only a handful of environments featured in her 2008 book that still exist a mere five years later.⁵¹ Hannemann has already experienced the partial demolition of the *Cathedral* in compliance with Austin city code, yet as a result of that experience he remains confident that the *Cathedral* has the power to live on indefinitely.

Because yard art environments skirt between socially commentative anthropological sites and contemporary folk art, differing views on the environments stagnate proper upkeep of the sites. Often folklorists and anthropologists overlook yard art due to its non-traditional forms and functions. Preservationists view folk art environments as something of value as long as the site is intact, while folk art collectors believe objects can be taken out of the environment and still be appreciated. Though many makers of such environments encourage and thrive on visitors, preservationists also tend to believe that the environment will be corrupted by traffic from outsiders.

Funding for preservation is tricky between the differing views as well as the complexity of necessary paperwork. The timespan between funding and recognition and the artist's death is crucial. The National Register can only consider a site after the artist has died, but only if the site is more than ten years old. While preservation debates dawdle, many environments are subjected to vandalism, demolition, and decay. Daniel Prince suggests in his essay "Preservation of Folk Art Environments: Techniques and

⁵¹ In conversation with the author, January 2013.

Case Histories” that the historic preservation movement become involved with the posterity of the yard environments.⁵²

Perhaps Hannemann is correct and his structure will stand as an Austin landmark, pointing to the “weird” city for generations. But without some sort of preservation plan in tact, the *Cathedral*’s posterity cannot be guaranteed. Even with a foundation, short funds can significantly stilt what level a yard environment can remain operational. Bottle Village is among such cases; the site only allows visitors to encounter the outside of the structures after the interior was damaged in a 1994 earthquake from which it lacks funding to fully recover. Other organizations exist to preserve art environments, though they are few. Some of the most well structured and well-maintained are The Orange Show Foundation in Houston (the foundation also maintains the Beer Can House), The Kohler Foundation that supports Fred Smith's concrete park in Phillips, Wis., and SPACES, a California organization dedicated to cataloging as many environments across the United States as possible.

For now, Hannemann is able to maintain his *Cathedral of Junk* and control its preservation. As time passes, funding and property use may reappear as issues for its preservation. In light of future challenges, proper documentation of the site is of utmost importance. It is my sincere hope that this thesis paper offers such accurate representation of such a historically fragile and culturally poignant piece of art.

⁵² Ward, 160-166.

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APPENDIX A: IMAGES



Fig. 1. Entrance to the Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: photograph taken by the author, January 2013.



Fig. 2. Panoramic view of the interior of the main dome at the Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: photograph taken by the author, January 2013.



Fig. 3. Staircase at Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: photograph taken by the author, January, 2013.



Fig. 4. Staircase view from the second story at the Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: photograph taken by the author, January 2013.



Fig. 5. Detail of stair made from a tire filled with cement and embedded objects, The Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: photograph taken by the author, January 2013.



Fig. 6. View of the back/exit of the Cathedral of Junk. If choosing the middle passage, one would exit from this doorway. Austin, TX. Source: photograph taken by the author.



Fig. 7. Freestanding fort in one corner of the backyard, The Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: photograph taken by the author, January 2013.



Figs. 8-9. Backyard corner displaying trophies and knickknacks, The Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: Jen Hellow, 2013.



Fig. 10. Throne at The Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: photograph taken by the author.



Fig. 11. Detail of what Vince Hannemann refers to as “the yellow room”, a section of the structure composed primarily in shades of yellow, The Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: Jen Hellow, 2013.

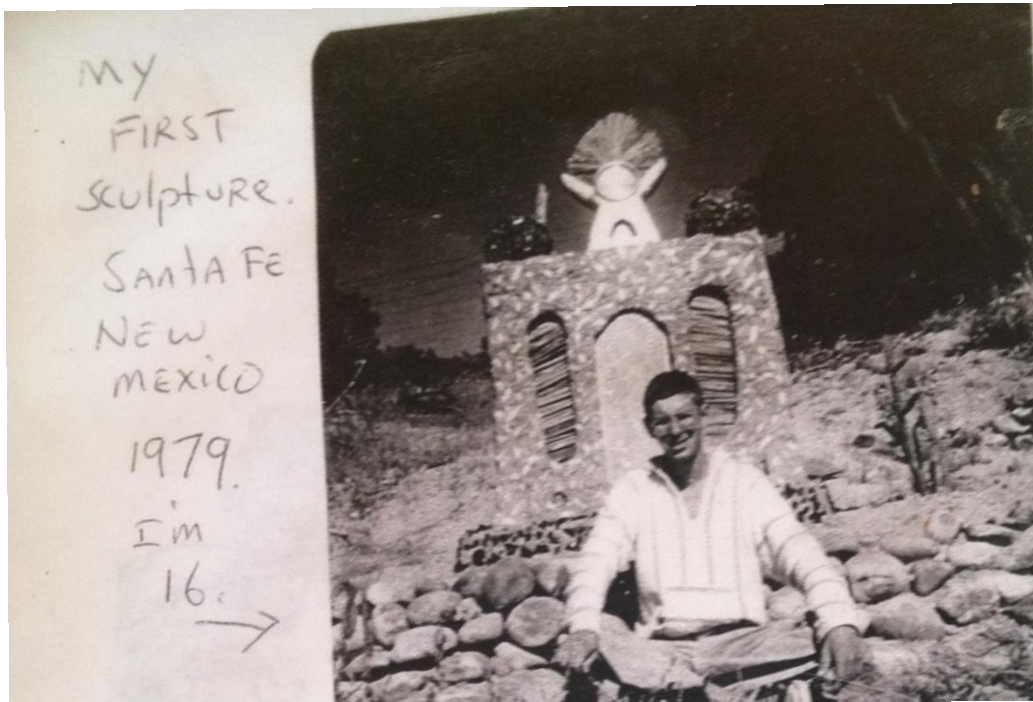


Fig. 12. Photograph displayed in a shed that acts as a miniature history museum near the entrance of the Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: photograph of the photograph taken by the author



Fig. 13. Vince Hannemann with his knuckle tattoos that read “JUNK KING”, Austin, TX. Source: Jen Hellow, January 2013.



Fig. 14. Cookware lids in Joe Minter's Yard. Source: Ginger at Deep Fried Kudzu. Alabama, 2006. Digital Image. Available at: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/deepfriedkudzu/115471143/in/set-72057594086704951> (accessed March 21, 2013)



Fig. 15. The Cathedral of Junk uses metal that is reflective in sunlight. Source: Jen Hellow, 2013



Fig. 16. Mirrors reflect layers of junk at The Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX Source: photo taken by author, 2013.



Fig. 17. Bowling balls at the Cathedral of Junk. Austin, 2013. Source: Jen Hellow



Fig. 18. Bowling balls at African Village in America. Alabama, 2006. Source: Ginger at Deep Fried Kudzu. Available from: Flickr, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/deepfriedkudzu/115470562/in/set-72057594086704951/> (accessed March 20, 2013).



Fig. 19. Circular object at the Cathedral of Junk. Austin, 2013. Source: Jen Hellow.



Fig. 20. Circular owl display at African Village in America. Alabama, 2006. Source: Ginger at Deep Fried Kudzu. Available from: Flickr, <http://www.flickr.com/photos/deepfriedkudzu/115471612/in/set-72057594086704951> (accessed March 20, 2013).



Fig. 21. Chairs commemorating ancestors in Joe Minter's yard, Alabama, 2006. Source: Ginger at Deep Fried Kudzu, available from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/deepfriedkudzu/115469155/in/set-72057594086704951> (accessed March 21, 2013).

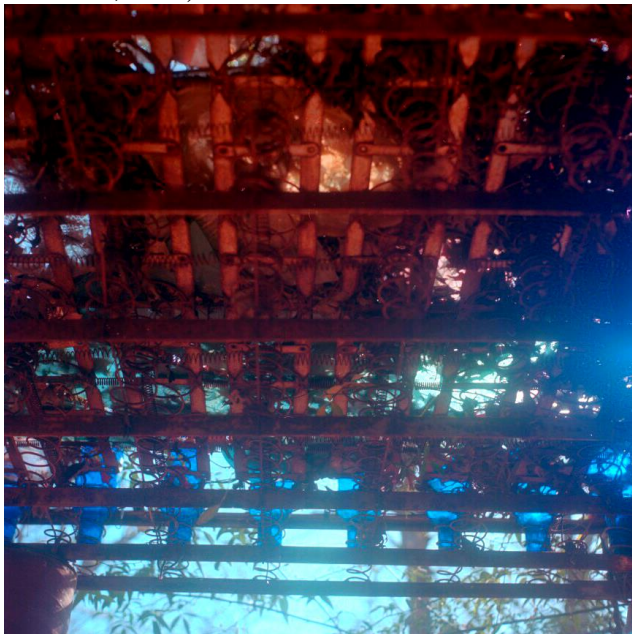


Fig. 22. Bottles nestled in a mattress spring used as a canopy at the Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: Jen Hellow.



Fig. 23. Upturned tub atop a mound of junk in the yellow section of the Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: photography taken by the author, January 2013.



Fig. 24. Discarded sink at African Village in America, Alabama, 2006. Source: Ginger at Deep Fried Kudzu available from: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/deepfriedkudzu/115433711/in/set-72057594086704951> (accessed March 21, 2013).



Fig. 25. Statement of origin in Joe Minter's yard, Alabama, 2013. Source: Ginger at Deep Fried Kudzu, available at Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/deepfriedkudzu/115453135/in/set-72057594086704951> (accessed March 21, 2013).



Fig. 26. Drum containing the brief story of the Cathedral of Junk, Austin, 2013. Source: photo taken by the author, 2013.



Fig. 27. Memorial to Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s Birmingham jail cell at African Village in America, Alabama, 2006. Source: Ginger at Deep Fried Kudzu available from Flickr: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/deepfriedkudzu/115468670/in/set-72057594086704951>



Fig. 28. Detail of a “dense” section of the Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: photograph taken by the author, 2009.



Fig. 29. Alcove within the Cathedral of Junk, Austin, TX. Source: photograph taken by the author, 2009.



Fig. 30. Display along the entry pathway at Spiderhouse café and bar in Austin, TX.
Source: photograph taken by the author, 2013.



Fig. 31: Frank Van Zant's Thunder Mountain Monument, Imlay, Nevada. Source: Uncle Bumpy Flickrriver. <http://www.flickrriver.com/photos/devonblunden/4149974689/>, November 30, 2009. Accessed June 15, 2013.



Fig. 32: Ira Poole's yard in Austin, TX. Source: Flickr. <http://www.flickr.com/photos/14451175@N03/1966788173/sizes/o/in/photostream/>. Accessed: June 15, 2013.



Fig. 33: Father Paul Dobberstein's Grotto of the Redemption
Source: Atlas Obscura. <http://www.atlasobscura.com/places/father-paul-dobbersteins-grotto-redemption>. Accessed June 15, 2013.



Fig. 34: Detail of structure at Howard Finster's Paradise Garden. Source: "Howard Finster's Paradise Garden", *The Southerly*, August 2012
<http://www.thesoutherly.com/2012/08/06/howard-finsters-paradise-garden/> Accessed: June 15, 2013.



Fig. 35: Watt's Towers, Los Angeles, Cal. Source: *Inside Los Angeles: The Watts Towers*. UrbanPeak.com. <http://urbanpeek.com/2011/09/07/inside-los-angeles-the-watts-towers/> Sept 7, 2011. Accessed June 15, 2013.



Fig. 36: One of the eight remaining structures at Tressa Prisbrey's Bottle Village, Simi Valley, Cal. Source: photo by Kathy LaForce published in Arnie Cooper. "Grandma Prisbrey Built a Village Made of Bottles" *The Wall Street Journal*. October 21, 2008. <http://online.wsj.com/article/SB122454634669052175.html>. Accessed June 15, 2013.



Fig. 37: Clarence Schmidt's House of Mirrors, Woodstock, New York. Source: David Goldin. "In Search of Clarence's House" August 5, 2009. <http://www.davidgoldin.com/clarence-house>.

APPENDIX II

Transcription of conversation with Vince Hannemann

January 14, 2013

Austin, TX, Cathedral of Junk

“In the last five years, basically I’ve been doing this full-time. So...it, uh...like last year I had about 14,000 people come through here. Every country in the world, as you can see. So, uh...”

“Yeah, ‘cause this is new too [speaking of a small room displaying the history of the Cathedral of Junk]”

“It’s been up and down and whatever, I had to get a building permit for it, have engineers sign off on it and the whole nine yards, you know, so, what can I say”

“Right. How do you like doing it full time?”

“Well, it’s a job.”

“Right. Do you like it better, or worse, or the same as your previous job?”

“Well, I wouldn’t do anything I didn’t like very long.”

“Fair enough.” [laughter]

“One other question I wanted to ask you: a source that I read cited that you drew inspiration from Watts Towers in Los Angeles a little bit.”

“Sure, yeah.”

“Are there any other things that you saw that you drew inspiration from?”

“Who knows, you know, that’s probably one of the, uh, I don’t know, not as far as that kind of stuff was concerned, but you know, I always kind of had a lot of permission in

my life to uh, you know, uh, I've been exposed to artists. My great-grandfather was an artist and my dad was an architect, so, uh, I know that art is a viable lifestyle, so you know, that gave me permission to do what I like, you know, the style of art that I like happens to be more in the Watts Tower kind of end, so, that also gives me permission. I think we all, you know, stand on the shoulders of giants. It always helps to have a little permission from the previous generation to help go a little bit further. He did it or she did it or whatever – why can't I? And you kind of take that a little bit further because they kind of show you the road. But, you know, uh, even though they kind of show you the direction to go, really nobody has blazed a trail as far as, I mean – there is no book as far how to do something like this. I try to make it up as I go. I wish I had these other people to consult with and say, you know, how did you do it? Whatever. Everybody's got a different story, this is my story.”

PERMISSION FOR PHOTOGRAPH USE

Permission slip  Grad School/Thesis MA   

 **Jen Hellow** <jen.hellow@gmail.com> Apr 1   
to me 

M Ruth Foster has permission to use photographs taken February 2013 by me, Jen Hellow, at the Cathedral of Junk in Austin, Texas for all purposes associated with the project for which the photographs were intended.

Formally signed,
Jen Hellow

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Photographs of Joe Minter  Grad School/Thesis MA   

 **M. Foster** <foster.collection@gmail.com> Mar 20   
to ginger 

Hello,

I am writing my M.A. art history thesis on the Cathedral of Junk in Austin, TX, and would like permission to use some of the photographs you have on your blog and your flickr account of Joe Minter's work for a comparison. This paper will not be distributed or published - it is only submitted to the graduate school. If in the future it is reformulated into a scholarly paper or book, I would certainly contact you for further permission regarding publication. As is now, the thesis will become part of the University of Memphis database of thesis papers, which is accessible only to faculty at the university.

Thanks for your time and consideration!

Michelle

 **Ginger at DeepFriedKudzu** Mar 21   
to me 

Hi Michelle -- yes, I give you my permission to use some of my Joe Minter pics for your project, granted that as you mentioned, you contact me again for permission to use them in the future in any fashion.

BTW, I'm a big fan of the Cathedral of Junk and am friends with one of the builder's/artist's friends (Scott Stevens, who has the art environment Smut Putt Heaven, also in Austin) -- would you mind emailing me a copy of your paper just so I can read it? Thank you!

Oh...I'm about to upload a bunch more Joe Minter pics from another visit this week. Look for them on my site in the next few days.

Thanks!

...

IRB PERMISSION

IRB Decision 2418 - No App Required

Grad School/Thesis MA x



 **Institutional Review Board** <irb@memphis.edu>
to M, Robert ▾

11/2/12 ☆



Hello,

The IRB Administrator has reviewed your Determination (2418). Based on the information provided on the form, you **do not** need to submit an application to the IRB as your research does not meet the Office of Human Subjects Research Protections definition of human subjects research. Should you have any questions for the IRB Administrator, you can e-mail her at jreid@memphis.edu.

Thank you,

Elijah Luebbe
Research Support Services
University of Memphis
315 Admin Bldg
Memphis, TN 38152-3370



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