



Smithsonian
Archives of American Art

A Finding Aid to the Andy Nasisse Files
Relating to Self-Taught Artists, circa 1979-
circa 1986, in the Archives of American Art.

Candice Yates

Funding for the processing of this collection
was provided by the Henry Luce Foundation.

2019/07/24

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Collection Overview

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| Repository: | Archives of American Art |
| Title: | Andy Nasisse files relating to self-taught artists |
| Identifier: | AAA.nasiandy |
| Date: | circa 1979-circa 1986 |
| Extent: | 0.8 Linear feet |
| Creator: | Nasisse, Andy S., 1946- |
| Language: | English . |
| Summary: | <p>The Andy Nasisse files relating to self-taught artists measure 0.8 linear feet and date from 1979 to 1986, with additional undated materials. Included are artist files on twenty-five self-taught artists. Files consist primarily of black and white photographs of artists, their artworks, and photographs of unidentified artworks. Also included is a letter discussing artist Howard Finster's first dealer, Jeffrey Camp, and in which Nasisse offers his advice to Finster to limit production of his work. An audio recording of an interview with Miles Carpenter conducted by Nasisse, and a documentary about J. B. Murray, <i>A Video Documentary of an Artist and His Work</i>, are also present in these files. The documentary features many of Murray's paintings and drawings, as well as his comments on his art and visions. The artists included in the files are Eldren M. (E. M.) Bailey, Miles Carpenter, Tessie Carroll, Emanuel "Litto" Damonte, Samuel Perry (S.P.) Dinsmoor, Sam Doyle, John Ehn, Howard Finster, Laura Pope Forrester, Dilmus Hall, Irene Hall, Bessie Harvey, St. EOM (Eddie Owens Martin), Jeff McKissack, John Milkovitch, J. B. Murray, Grandma Tressa Prsbrey, Dow Pugh, W.T. Ratcliffe (or Ratliff), William Carlton Rice (Mr. Rice), Royal Robertson, James "Son Ford" Thomas, Mose Tolliver, Frank van Zant (Chief Rolling Mountain Thunder), and Brother Joseph Zoetl.</p> |

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

The Andy Nasisse files relating to self-taught artists were donated to the Archives of American Art by Andy Nasisse in 1985.

Related Materials

Also found in the Archives of American Art are the Photographs and videos of self-taught artists; Willie Ann Wright photographs; Howard Finster papers; John F. Turner research material on Howard Finster; Howard Finster interview and recordings; Videos and slides on Dilmus Hall, Mary T. Smith, and J.B. Murry; Willem Volkersz interviews; and J. B. Murray

drawings. There is also an oral history interview with Howard Finster conducted by Liza Kirwin in 1984.

The California State University, Channel Islands holds the Prisbrey bottle village collection. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill holds the Judith McWillie papers. The University of Georgia Special Collections Libraries holds the Howard Finster collection and the Howard Finster Tapes.

Processing Information

This collection was minimally processed and a finding aid prepared in 2019 by Candice Yates, supervised by Rayna Andrews with funding from the Henry Luce Foundation.

Preferred Citation

Andy Nasisse files relating to self-taught artists, circa 1979-circa 1986. Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution.

Restrictions

This collection is open for research. Access to original papers requires an appointment and is limited to the Archives' Washington, D.C. Research Center.

Researchers interested in accessing audiovisual recordings in this collection must use access copies. Contact Reference Services for more information.

Conditions Governing Use

Video on J.B. Murray: Authorization to publish, quote, or reproduce requires written permission from Andy Nasisse. Contact Reference Services for more information.

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Biographical / Historical

Andy Nasisse (1946-) is a ceramicist sculptor, potter, and former professor at the University of Georgia. Starting in the 1970s, he visited self-taught artists and photographed their art, environments and, in some cases, conducted interviews with them. He has had a solo exhibition at the Museum of Contemporary Art Georgia and is the recipient of the Art Regional Fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Miles Carpenter (also known as Miles Burkholder Carpenter or Miles B. Carpenter) (1889-1985) was a sculptor active in Waverly, Virginia who carved figures and animals from wood and referred to some as "advertisements."

Tessie Carroll was an Oklahoma folk artist known for her rock sculptures and carvings.

Eldren M. (E.M.) Bailey (1903-1987) was an African American sculptor and painter from Atlanta, Georgia whose sculptures were influenced from his background making grave markers.

Emanuel "Litto" Damonte (1892-1985) started collecting hubcaps in 1957 and created an art environment on his property in Napa Country, California, known as *Hubcap Ranch*.

Samuel Perry (S.P.) Dinsmoor (1843-1932) was a Kansan sculptor who designed a sculpture garden at his home called the *Garden of Eden*," consisting of over 200 concrete works reflecting his religious and political beliefs.

Sam Doyle (1906-1985) was an African American artist born on St. Helena, an island off the coast of South Carolina, whose colorful paintings document the island's people and Gullah culture.

John Ehn (1887-1981) was a former trapper turned sculptor who decorated the landscape of his Californian motel, *Old Trapper's Lodge*, with sculptures depicting myths and the Old West.

Howard Finster (1916-2001) was a Georgian folk artist and Baptist minister known for his former home, *Paradise Garden*, consisting of constructions, found objects and sculptures.

Laura Pope Forrester (1873-1953) was a sculptor who created figurative works in her Georgian garden that depicted notable women and fictional characters.

Dilmus Hall (1896-1987) was an African American artist whose sculptural works are associated with religious customs that combine African traditions and Christianity.

Irene Hall was an Oklahoman artist who decorated her home with sculptural works she had made with found objects.

Bessie Harvey (1929-1994) was an African American folk artist from Tennessee who created wooden sculptures often inspired by nature.

Eddie Owens Martin "St. EOM" (1908-1986) was a Georgian artist who created a visionary art environment called *Pasaquan*.

Jeff McKissack (1902-1980) is the creator of *The Orange Show*, an art environment constructed in Houston Texas to honor his favorite fruit.

John Milkovitch (1912-1988) was a retired upholsterer who constructed the *Beer Can House*, by decorating his home with over 50,000 fattened beer cans.

J. B. Murry (1910-1988) (also known as J.B. Murray) was an African American painter who incorporated illegible text in his work which he interpreted with the use of a bottle of well water.

Tressa "Grandma" Prisbrey (1896-1988) constructed numerous structures out of bottles and found objects at her home creating what became known as Grandma Prisbrey's Bottle Village.

Dow Pugh (1906-1993) was an artist from Tennessee who created paintings and sculptural works.

W. T. Ratcliffe was an engineer who, in the 1930s created sculptures in Boulder Park in Jacumba, California.

William Carlton Rice (1930-2004) was a self-ordained minister who created a *Cross Garden* around his home in Alabama.

Royal Robertson (1936-1997) was an African American artist and self-proclaimed prophet from Louisiana whose work incorporated biblical themes, and references to "girlie magazines" and comic strips.

James "Son Ford" Thomas (1926- 1993) was an African American sculptor and blues musician from Mississippi who is known for his clay skull sculptures.

Mose Tolliver (1919-2006) was an African American folk painter from Alabama who painted with house paint on wood.

Frank van Zant "Chief Rolling Mountain Thunder" (1921-1989) was an Oklahoman artist who created a park in Nevada dedicated to the American Indian known as Thunder Mountain Monument.

Brother Joseph Zoetl (1878-1961) was a monk who constructed a miniature city of famous religious buildings at St. Bernard Abbey known as Ave Maria Grotto.

Scope and Contents

The Andy Nasisse files relating to self-taught artists measure 0.8 linear feet and date from 1979 to 1986, with additional undated materials. Included are artist files on twenty-five self-taught artists. Files consist primarily of black and white photographs of artists, their artworks, and photographs of unidentified artworks. Also included is a letter discussing artist Howard Finster's first dealer, Jeffrey Camp, and in which Nasisse offers his advice to Finster to limit production of his work. An audio recording of an interview with Miles Carpenter conducted by Nasisse, and a documentary about J. B. Murray, *A Video Documentary of an Artist and His Work*, are also present in these files. The documentary features many of Murray's paintings and drawings, as well as his comments on his art and visions.

The artists included in the files are Eldren M. (E. M.) Bailey, Miles Carpenter, Tessie Carroll, Emanuel "Litto" Damonte, Samuel Perry (S.P.) Dinsmoor, Sam Doyle, John Ehn, Howard Finster, Laura Pope Forrester, Dilmus Hall, Irene Hall, Bessie Harvey, St. EOM (Eddie Owens Martin), Jeff McKissack, John Milkovitch, J. B. Murray, Grandma Tressa Prsbrey, Dow Pugh, W.T. Ratcliffe (or Ratliff), William Carlton Rice (Mr. Rice), Royal Robertson, James "Son Ford" Thomas, Mose Tolliver, Frank van Zant (Chief Rolling Mountain Thunder), and Brother Joseph Zoetl.

Names and Subject Terms

This collection is indexed in the online catalog of the Smithsonian Institution under the following terms:

Subjects:

African American artists
Self-taught artists

Types of Materials:

Sound recordings
Video recordings

Names:

Bailey, E. M. (Eldren M.)
Carpenter, Miles B. (Miles Burkholder), 1889-
Carroll, Tessie
Damonte, Emanuel "Litto", d. 1985
Dinsmoor, Samuel Perry, 1843-1932
Doyle, Sam, 1906-1985

Ehn, John Henry, 1896-1981
Finster, Howard, 1916-2001
Forester, Laura Pope, 1873-1953
Hall, Dilmus, 1900-1987
Hall, Irene Gibson, ca. 1895-1983
Harvey, Bessie, 1929-
McKissack, Jeff, 1902-1980
Milkovitch, John, 1912-1988
Murry, J. B. (John B.), 1908-1988 (John B.)
Prisbrey, Tressa
Pugh, Dow, 1906-
Ratcliffe, W. T., 1882-1956
Rice, William Carlton, 1930-2004
Robertson, Royal
St. EOM, 1908-1986
Thomas, Son, 1926-1993
Tolliver, Mose, 1920-
Van Zant, Frank, 1911-1989
Zoetl, Joseph, 1878-1961

Occupations:

Ceramicists -- Georgia
Educators -- Georgia
Folk artists
Potters -- Georgia

Container Listing

Series 1: Andy Nasisse Files Relating to Self-Taught Artists, 1979-1986 , undated

0.8 Linear feet (Boxes 1-2)

Included are artist files on twenty-five self-taught artists. Files consist primarily of black and white photographs of artists, their artworks, and photographs of unidentified artworks. Also included is a letter discussing artist Howard Finster's first dealer, Jeffrey Camp, and in which Nasisse offers his advice to Finster to limit production of his work. An audio recording of an interview with Miles Carpenter conducted by Nasisse, and a documentary about J. B. Murray, *A Video Documentary of an Artist and His Work*, are also present in these files. The documentary features many of Murray's paintings and drawings, as well as his comments on his art and visions.

Files are arranged alphabetically by artist.

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| Box 1, Folder 1 | Eldren M. (E.M.) Bailey, undated Includes photographs of Henry Aaron sculpture. |
| Box 1, Folder 2 | Miles Carpenter Interview by Andy Nasisse, Audio Recording, 1979 December <i>1 Sound cassette</i> English. |
| Box 1, Folder 3 | Tessie Carroll, undated English. |
| Box 1, Folder 4 | Emanuel "Litto" Damonte, <i>Hubcap Ranch</i> , undated English. |
| Box 1, Folder 5 | Samuel Perry (S.P.) Dinsmoor, <i>Garden of Eden</i> , undated English. |
| Box 1, Folder 6 | Sam Doyle, 1984 English. Includes negatives. |
| Box 1, Folder 7 | John Ehn, <i>Old Trapper's Lodge</i> , undated English. |
| Box 1, Folder 8 | Howard Finster, undated English. Includes negatives. |
| Box 1, Folder 9 | Howard Finster Correspondence from Andy S. Nasisse, 1985 English. |

- Box 1, Folder 10 Laura Pope Forrester Pope's Museum in Pelham, GA , 1986
English.
- Box 1, Folder 11 Dilmus Hall, undated
English.
- Box 1, Folder 12 Irene Hall, undated
English.
- Box 1, Folder 13 Bessie Harvey, undated
English.
- Box 1, Folder 14 Eddie Owens Martin "St. EOM," *Pasaquan* in Buena Vista, GA, 1986
English.
Photographs taken after Eddie Owens Martin's death.
- Box 1, Folder 15 Jeff McKissack, *The Orange Show*, undated
English.
- Box 1, Folder 16 John Milkovitch, *Beer Can House*, undated
English.
- Box 1, Folder 17 J.B. Murry, 1985
English.
J.B. Murry is also known as J.B. Murray.
- Box 1, Folder 18 J.B. Murry, Video Recording, *A Video Documentary of an Artist and His Work*,
1985
1 Videocassettes (VHS)
English.
J.B. Murry is also known as J.B. Murray.
- Box 2, Folder 1 J.B. Murry, Video Recording, *A Video Documentary of an Artist and His Work*,
1985
1 Videocassettes (U-matic)
English.
- Box 2, Folder 2 Grandma Tressa Prisbrey, *Bottle Village*, undated
English.
- Box 2, Folder 3 Dow Pugh, undated
English.
- Box 2, Folder 4 W.T. Ratcliffe, Desert Valley Tower and Boulder Park, undated

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| | English. |
| Box 2, Folder 5 | William Carlton Rice, <i>Cross Garden</i> , 1986 English. |
| Box 2, Folder 6 | Royal Robertson, 1986 English. |
| Box 2, Folder 7 | Royal Robertson, 1986 English. Includes negatives. |
| Box 2, Folder 8 | James "Son Ford" Thomas, undated English. |
| Box 2, Folder 9 | Mose Tolliver, circa 1980 English. Includes negatives. |
| Box 2, Folder 10 | Unidentified Artworks, undated English. |
| Box 2, Folder 11 | Frank van Zant "Chief Rolling Mountain Thunder," <i>Thunder Mountain Monument</i> ", undated English. |
| Box 2, Folder 12 | Brother Joseph Zoetl, <i>Ave Maria Grotto</i> , undated English. |

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