



Smithsonian

National Museum of American History Kenneth E. Behring Center

Guide to the Christina Patoski Holiday Photoprints

NMAH.AC.0508

David Haberstich

1998

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Collection Overview

Repository:	Archives Center, National Museum of American History
Title:	Christina Patoski Holiday Photoprints
Date:	circa 1973-1992
Identifier:	NMAH.AC.0508
Creator:	Patoski, Christina (Photographer)
Extent:	1 Cubic foot (2 boxes; 16" x 20")
Language:	English .
Summary:	Fourteen color photographic prints by Christina Patoski, depicting front-lawn and front-porch holiday displays (primarily Christmas) in various U.S. cities.

Administrative Information

Acquisition Information

Collection donated by Christina Patoski, December 14, 1994.

Provenance

These photographs were selected by the Archives Center curator of photography from the National Museum of American History's exhibition, "A Front Yard View of the Holidays," December 11, 1993 to January 2, 1994. The exhibition was curated by Eleanor Boyne of the NMAH staff. The photographer agreed to donate fourteen prints to the Archives Center, and the remaining photographs were returned to the photographer.

Processing Information

Collection processed by NMAH Staff, 1996.

Preferred Citation

[Photograph title], Christina Patoski Holiday Photoprints, 1973-1992, Archives Center, National Museum of American History. Copyright Christina Patoski. Gift of the artist.

Restrictions

Collection is open for research but is stored off-site and special arrangements must be made to work with it. Contact the Archives Center for information at archivescenter@si.edu or 202-633-3270.

Conditions Governing Use

Christina Patoski retains copyright. Archives Center cost-recovery and use fees may apply when requesting reproductions.

Biographical / Historical

Photographer, documentary producer, and journalist, Christina Patoski began photographing front-lawn and front-porch Christmas displays in 1973, in Fort Worth, Texas, beginning with a house on Diaz Street in the Como neighborhood. She called the photograph "Red Extravaganza," and it inspired her to photograph other houses. Driving up and down Fort Worth Streets at Christmastime with her saxophonist husband Johnny Reno, she worked exclusively at night. Concentrating at first on the most elaborate displays, she later sought simpler, more personal decorations, and became more discriminating. She repeated in many areas of the country as part of an ongoing project spread over many years. She is interested in documenting "unusual" elements of popular culture within a variety of topical fields.

She told the Fort Worth Star-Telegram, "I've seen so much, that for me to stop and take a photo now, it has to be something special... I've noticed, though, that there are a lot of houses decorated this year. And to me, that indicates a sense of optimism... when people decorate, there's a sense of good feeling."

Her photographic technique is simple, employing two fifteen-year-old 35mm cameras and low-speed Kodachrome film, using commercial processing. She has been photographing since she was a child, when her father encouraged her. Graduating from the University of Minnesota School of Journalism, she spent several years in Minneapolis as a dancer, choreographer, and television editor. She returned to Fort Worth in 1976 to work in television news, but since 1979 has been a free-lance writer, radio reporter (contributing to National Public Radio's "All Things Considered"), and a producer and writer.

She is interested in documenting unusual elements of popular culture (what she calls "weirdness"), such as her Texas Monthly story, illustrated with her portraits, on Texas women with "big" hair. She maintains files on longhorn steer, pyromaniacs, tornadoes, and cheerleading, and considers herself a "Margaret Mead of popular culture."

Sources Jackie Koszczuk and Janet Tyson, "A Sense of the festive: Photographer captures home-grown Christmas Art," Fort Worth Star-Telegram, Section E, December 25, 1993, pp. 1, 4.

Scope and Contents

The fourteen photographs in this group are Cibachrome prints from 35mm. Kodachrome slides, documenting front-lawn and front-porch holiday displays (primarily Christmas) in various U.S. cities, including a variety of economic, ethnic, and regional groups, architectural genres, and decorating styles, documenting a "unique seasonal custom found only in America." Several images suggest attempts to broaden the cultural/religious basis of the celebration, combining Jewish traditions with the Christmas decorating tradition. Cities documented are Denver, Fort Worth, Minneapolis, Sun Valley (Idaho), Manhattan and Brooklyn, N.Y., Corpus Christi, Dallas, Ft. Lauderdale, New Orleans, and Santa Fe.

The Cibachrome prints are horizontal on 16" x 20" paper, with 22" x 28" mats, except for "Holiday Spectacular," which was used on an introductory panel in a national Museum of American History exhibition, without a mat.

Arrangement

Collection is unarranged.

Names and Subject Terms

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

Subjects:

Christianity and other religions -- Judaism -- Holiday decorations -- 1970-2000
Christmas decorations -- 1970-2000
Decorations -- Holiday -- 1950-2000 -- U.S.
Hanukkah decorations -- 1970-2000
Holiday decorations -- 1970-2000
Housing -- 1950-2000 -- U.S.
Judaism -- Customs and practices

Types of Materials:

Cibachrome (TM)
Dye destruction photoprints
Dye destruction process
Photographs -- Color photoprints -- 1950-2000

Places:

Brooklyn (N.Y.) -- Holiday decorations
Corpus Christi (Texas) -- Holiday decorations
Dallas (Texas)
Denver (Colo.) -- Holiday decorations
Fort Lauderdale (Fla.) -- Holiday decorations
Fort Worth (Tex.) -- Holiday decorations
Minneapolis (Minn.) -- Holiday decorations
New Orleans (La.) -- Holiday decorations
New York (N.Y.) -- Holiday decorations
Santa Fe (N.M.) -- Holiday decorations
Sun Valley (Idaho) -- Holiday decorations

Container Listing

Box 1, Item 1	Hybrid Holiday, Denver, Colorado
Box 1, Item 2	Porky and Friends, Fort Worth, Texas
Box 1, Item 3	Wayfarer's Holiday, Fort Worth, Texas (trailer).
Box 1, Item 4	Snow-buried Lights, Minneapolis, Minnesota
Box 1, Item 5	Miner's House, Sun Valley, Idaho
Box 1, Item 6	Little Italy, New York City
Box 1, Item 7	Creche Medley, Corpus Christi, Texas
Box 2, Item 8	Yarmulke Boy, Ft. Lauderdale, Florida
Box 2, Item 9	Highland Park Spread Oak, Dallas, Texas
Box 2, Item 10	Venus de Milo, Dallas, Texas
Box 2, Item 11	New Orleans Nocturne
Box 2, Item 12	Acquia Madre Wall, Santa Fe, New Mexico
Box 2, Item 13	High Rise, Brooklyn, New York
Box 2, Item 14	Holiday Spectacular