

CURATOR'S STATEMENT

For as long as people have been collecting art created by untrained and often visionary men and women, there has been scholarly debate as to the proper term or name for such art. Folk Art, Outsider Art, Naive Art, are the most common names applied, and those who support the use of one term or another base their arguments on very specific behind the definition of each term. Adding to the confusion is our knowledge that some of the artists whose work is so categorized are either mentally or emotionally impaired, and many have spent at least a portion of their adult lives in institutional settings. Others have used drugs of one sort or another and the resulting work reflects either a heightened use of color or attention to detail. A further complication is the reality that some well-trained twentieth century artists have not only been inspired by the art of these untrained or visionary artists, but have emulated them and incorporated elements of their "style" or imagery into their own work. Yet, until recent times, the identities of the artists and the reasons behind their passion have been of minor concern to all but the specialists, the folklorists, and sometimes the medical profession.

However, in recent years, a newer breed of collector has come to the stage, people who have been interested in both the originality, immediacy, and impact of the art, and the folk artist as a human being. In the United States, a small band of those collectors have broken the traditional desire of collectors to hide their sources, and to generously and enthusiastically share the names and locations of the work of each new artist they discover.

The Arient family are of this new breed, but have gone way beyond collecting the work and amassing a major collection. They are unique in their commitment to buying directly from the artist, and getting to know her or him. They have been using pretty much all their vacation time over the past three decades, driving wherever they needed to meet an artist whose work they have admired or to make return visits as old friends and supporters. Thus, Beth, Jim, and Matt Arient have not only gotten to know the artists, to hear directly from them about their interests, passions, and beliefs, but have also been happy to see 100 % of the money they have paid go directly to the often impecunious artist.

It is the work itself that is a pleasure to see, to appreciate, and to understand as the creation of a man or woman with a passion for their work, a belief that they are creating out of conviction and inner drive. Some of these artists are strong colorists, others have a wonderful way with line, and still others convey their message through scale or detail

None of these artists studied in any formal way, none attended an art

school or academy, yet all of their work speaks to those of us who recognize the power of the creative spirit whose manifestations we see here in the Arient Family Collection.

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