
SINGULAR SPACES

The volume *Singular Spaces II* completes the comprehensive and groundbreaking study of art environments created by self-taught artists from across Spain, documented by Jo Farb Hernández, director emerita of the world's most important archives on these monumental sites. It introduces and examines ninety-nine artists and their intriguing and idiosyncratic sculptures, homes, and gardens, most of which have never been thoroughly documented or previously published; the author has cast a wide net to ensure all regions of Spain are represented, as are all kinds of spaces assembled with all kinds of materials.

These sites are developed organically and additively, without formal architectural or engineering plans: they are at once evolving and complete. Often highly fanciful and quixotic, the work is frequently characterized by incongruous juxtapositions, the result of a dynamic approach to creation that may appear impulsive and spontaneous. But these artists and their works have much to teach us about the process of creation and also about the confidence to undertake a path radically different from the one they had followed during the prime of their working lives.

Hernández combines detailed case studies of the artists and their work with contextualized historical and theoretical references to a broad range of interlocking fields, including art, art history, anthropology, vernacular architecture, Spanish area studies, and folklore, complemented with compelling visuals of each of the artists and their artworks. Breaking down the standard compartmentalization of genres, she reveals how most creators of art environments, building within their own personal spaces, fuse their creations with their daily life in a way generally unmatched in any other circumstances of making art, thus in the process providing an open self-reflection of their life and concerns. The universality of the need to create, and the issues that are confronted when one does so in a public and non-sanctioned way, are relevant to art and artists worldwide.

Jo Farb Hernández, Director Emerita of SPACES and the Natalie and James Thompson Art Gallery at San José State University, is an internationally-recognized scholar in this field, and an award-winning author, curator, and photographer. Her work has illuminated—and preserved via documentation—the creative lives of individuals who, working outside of the commercial spheres, may have otherwise gone unnoticed, and bodies of work that often cease to exist after the artist is no longer alive to care for it. In a field wherein each artist's work is ongoing, organic, and accumulative but also impacted by real world elements, this kind of long-term study is critical—and too rarely done. Hernández has been dedicated to the field of self-taught artists and vernacular art environment builders for five decades and is one of very few scholars to dedicate their careers to this under-recognized community of makers. She was among the early pioneers in the United States, and has become a singular force in her work on the self-taught artists of Spain. In conjunction with her first volume on this subject (*Singular Spaces. From the Eccentric to the Extraordinary in Spanish Art Environments*, Raw Vision 2013), *Singular Spaces II* provides an encyclopedic treatment of the field.