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Places For The Spirit: Traditional African American Gardens



Synopsis

Places for the Spirit is a stunning collection of over 80 documentary photographs of African American folk gardens and their creators; in the Deep South (Louisiana, Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia, South Carolina, and North Carolina). These landscapes have a unique historical significance due to the design elements and spiritual meanings that have been traced to the yards and gardens of American slaves and further back to their prior African heritage. These deceptively casual or whimsical foliage arrangements are subtle and symbolic reminders of the divine in everyday life, the cycles of nature, and implied right and wrong ways to live. In the spirit of outsider art traditions, blues musical roots, and other such folk manifestations, these gardens have a unique aesthetic and cultural significance. Over 20 years in the making, this is the first collection of fine art photography to document this subject and, as such, it adds greatly to our understanding and appreciation of this disappearing element of African American culture.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The reproductions in this book just don't match the originals on display at the gallery (Chicago Botanic Gardens). I've found this to be the case with similar books, which serve merely as a record of the exhibition. Still, I like the art and spirit of the creators of the gardens photographed and thereby get enjoyment from the book such as it is; there is something about these humble gardens that is just so right and true. So, three stars.

It is a beautiful book. However I was disappointed that it was in black and white. I hoped it would be in color

All prints are B&W prints and they are of good quality with a lot of detail, but when I think of gardens and flowers I see color. It's interesting to see the creativity in using found or discarded objects for flower pots or garden borders, not sure if they are any different than many other southern gardens though.

This book is not a good representation of gardens of African Americans. Most of the places could hardly be called gardens at all, most of them were just junk heaps. I have seen many, many outstanding vegetable and flower gardens of African Americans, this book was a very sad account.

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