

# HOROSCOPES FOR THE DAMNED

ART BY: JAMES DRAKE

JAMES W. JOHNSON

CHASE YARBROUGH

# **HOROSCOPES FOR THE DAMNED**

**Works by**

**James Drake**

**James W. Johnson**

**Chase Yarbrough**

**January 8 - February 28, 1987**

**Contemporary Art for San Antonio  
Blue Star Art Space  
San Antonio, Texas**

**Sponsored in part by Lake-Flato Architects, Inc. San Antonio, Texas**

## HOROSCOPES FOR THE DAMNED

Like drunks emptying into the street at the closing of the bar, we enter this exhibition and sense a loss of our equilibrium. A dark presence prevails. The night is ink black, the day bleached bone white. The smooth-way of everyday expectations has been subsumed by the mindscape's flipside. The temperature drops and we notice that the colors have been drained from the figures and objects.

Our artists are all moralists and they have turned the exhibition space into arenas for their morality plays. They carefully stage but they do not choose sides: the artists themselves, intact, have retreated leaving their quasi-surreal sets peopled with demons, tricksters, and specters of the void.

... TO BREAK THE SPELL OF SUNDAY  
I OFFERED THE GANGSTER A SILK EAR  
AND FIRST COPIES OF A FAMOUS HOROSCOPE  
HE DEMANDED AN UNWRITTEN CONTRACT  
WITNESSED BY A GYPSY QUEEN.  
Bob Kaufman <sup>1</sup>

## COUNTDOWN

James Drake's hardware is cast and welded steel: hardware beautifully fashioned by a smith, as in DRESSING TABLE and WALK-IN FILE CABINET; hardware within easy reach of an artist, an assassin or a saint. Black and aloof, these heavy metal tableaus exude a weightlessness as all gesture and manner of violence have been placed in a state of suspended animation. Wall mounted or decapitated, his gargoyles preside over the bric-a-brac of passion and chance. In their coldness they cut with the burn of the sculptor's torch.

The paradox of selfhood is symbolized in Drake's TRIPTYCH. The mounted guardians are frozen in silence, the rose petrified, and armless MONA turns her face to the central panel's impenetrable void. The terror and passion implied in TRIPTYCH successfully fulfills the Surrealists' requirement that art should be used to set people free and that the art object should be used to trigger liberty's rites of passage.

Time and space congeal in Drake's sculptural environments. Their solitude reverberates with an imagined clank, a remembered thud. The steel statuary has been stripped naked.

... GO ON TIP YOUR HAT UP TO THE PILOT  
TAKE OFF YOUR WATCH, YOUR RINGS AND ALL  
EVEN JESUS WANTED JUST A LITTLE MORE TIME  
WHEN HE WAS WALKING SPANISH DOWN THE HALL ...  
Tom Waits <sup>2</sup>

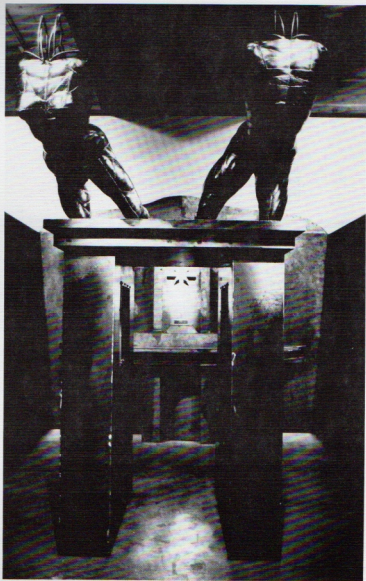
Our three artists have proven that they are masterful set designers. Their sculptural environments are ghostly familiar, and if our lonely contemplation of their environs contains the shock of recognition, that is because they have made it human. Our own confusion is our own illusion. These sculptures are concrete. They appeal to the living heart, with the understanding that all life is a passage through time energized by positive and negative forces; fate and chance dictating as they will. James Drake, James W. Johnson, and Chase Yarbrough have only accounted for reality by adjusting the rules of the game, "Scissors, Rock, and Paper"; they give us instead...a switch blade, chunks of pavement and a notice of eviction.

Jim Edwards  
San Antonio, Texas  
December, 1987

#### NOTES

1. Bob Kautman, "Transaction" from **The Ancient Rain: Poems 1956-1978** New York: New Directions 1981
2. Tom Waits, "Walking Spanish" from **Rain Dogs**, New York: Island Records 1985.
3. Charles Bukowski, "Imbecile Night" from **Cold Dogs in the Courtyard** as published in a review "What Bukowski Has Really Done / Is Doing To U.S. Poetry" by Hugh Fox, San Francisco: Second Coming Press Vol.II No. III, 1974
4. Paul Blackburn, "Meditation on the BMT" from **Brooklyn-Manhattan Transit: A Bouquet For Flatbush**, New York, Totem Press 1960





"CHURCH II" (detail: altar)

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

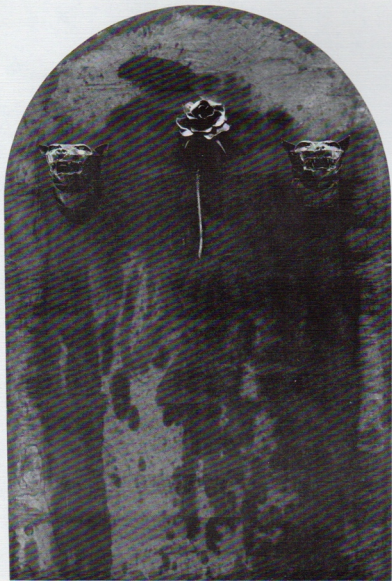
In the past my approach to making art was a no holds barred attitude. I felt all of the images that passed through my brain were fair game and therefore, could be used in my work. Sometimes that made for very exciting and controversial art.

Today I am not totally convinced of that approach. For one thing, most people misinterpreted the work and this was very disappointing to me. I now believe that an artist cannot be devoid of a certain responsibility and should carefully consider and evaluate those visual thoughts and images. Hopefully, this will lead to a work of art that is powerful, honest and transcends the banality of decoration and the pressure of the market-place.

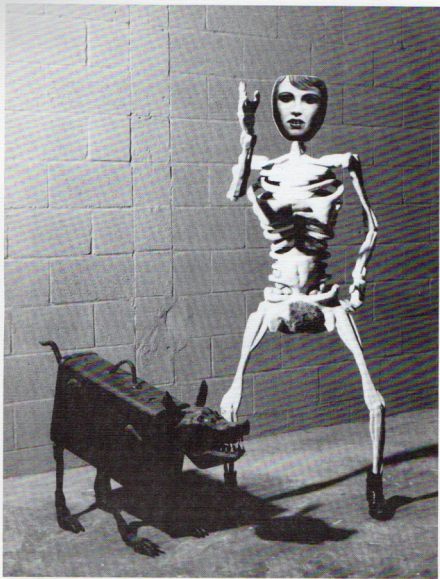
JAMES DRAKE



"DRESSING TABLE"



"GUARDIAN OF THE FLOWER"



"Mr. Suitcase"

"Missy"

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

Missy asked me, the other day, why I made art. I replied "I don't know. I guess because I'm afraid not to." She looked at me kind of funny. I didn't know what else to say, so I asked her if she liked art. She said "I guess so. I never really thought about it."

Later, it bothered me that Missy never really thought about art. I decided to ask some other people what they thought about art.

Missy's father, Neil, told me that "Paintings and stuff like that are okay but TV is the art of the future. It has pictures, words, music, and commercials." I tried to figure out how I could fit some advertising space into my work.

Lucy, Missy's stepmother, scowled and snapped "Art is a waste of money. Can you believe that some fool paid 50 million bucks for one painting last week? You could buy a castle for less than that." Good point. I'll bet she would love to have her own dungeon.

I ran into a housepainter named Ben. His reply was "Art? Art is great! Artists get laid all of the time. You know, I'm sort of an artist in my own right. I make these photo-collages with naked women. I'm even going to hire my own models when I get some money together." Sounded like just another Rape Artist to me.

I asked this old woman on the street. Her name was Christine. She must have been an ex-farmer because her only response was "You can't eat art." Tough shit. I thought to myself Street people have no culture.

Dogging her trail, I met Bobo, the Reaper. He said "I only like bad art. Good art takes too long to die." I could tell by his clothes that he had no taste.

Cleo, a struggling musician/waitress, lit up at the question. She declared that "Art is what makes the world bearable. It is a sharing of intimacy on a public scale. A reassurance that life, in all its beauty and repulsiveness, is precious." I left her a lousy tip and figured she was probably still in graduate school.

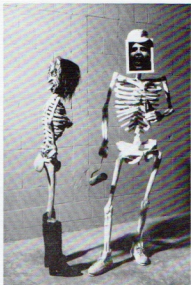
My last try was Camille, a hooker. Camille didn't think much about art either but was compelled to say that she met this artist once who wanted to trade a painting for her services. She told him no, so I didn't bother trying.

I wasn't real thrilled with the results of my survey and while I was walking home, I wondered if I was wasting my time being an artist. My thoughts were interrupted when a 6½ foot bat stepped out from the shadows. He was an ominous figure and I knew he was King Bat. He spoke, "I hear that you've been wondering if anyone gives a shit about what you do. I'm here to tell you that they don't. And they probably never will. You should get a real job. If you can't handle that, I'd be happy to suck the life out of you, right here and now." I was too petrified to understand what he was saying. I broke his stare, mumbled "Fuck you" and ran to the nearest 7-Eleven.

James W. Johnson



"Caspar"



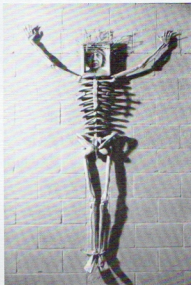
"Dale"

"Ben"



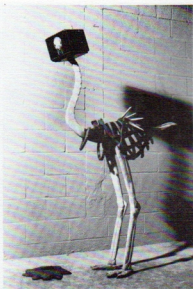
"Devon"

"Mr. Parrot"

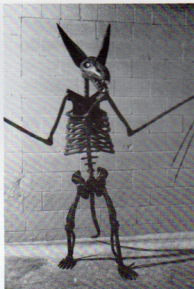


"Christine"

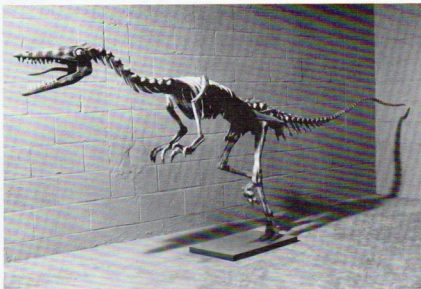




"Ozzie"



"King Bar"



"Runner"





"CITY PLANNING"

## ARTIST'S STATEMENT

### "CITY PLANNING"

As a sculptor, I utilize various mediums in my work including found objects.

One day I was collecting materials in what is now known as the arts district. In the abandoned Borden Milk plant, later to be the new Dallas Symphony Hall, I found a pigeonhole. A pigeonhole is a bird-house like structure, in which messages and route information is given to the drivers.

The pigeonhole resembled a miniature skyscraper and became for me the seed that was planted and grew into CITY PLANNING. As in previous work the idea began as a simple pedestal sculpture, however the more I came in contact with the area, and its residents, the more I began to ask questions which developed into an environmental statement that utilizes symbols that confront us in day to day living. Next to the Arts District is City Place, the largest corporate headquarters for Southland Corporation.

It is here where Victorian homes have fallen into wreck and ruin, and many people are losing their homes to make way for the pristine super structures of the city.

I began to interview a few of the primarily black residents of the neighborhood whose homes will soon be demolished by the bulldozers.

One evening I happened upon an elderly couple who were sitting on their front porch. Talking to them they expressed their concern about the changes that were taking place all around them and the impending demolition of their home. I asked them if I might check on them from time to time to possibly acquire a portion of their porch for my sculpture.

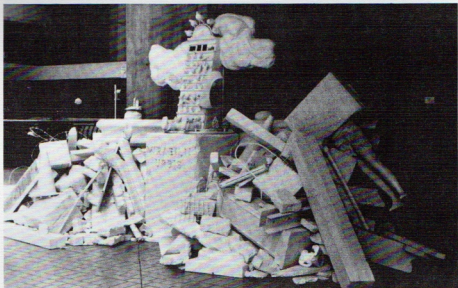
At once she exclaimed, "Take this and this," pulling off pieces of her porch. Feeling alarmed and embarrassed I said, "I'll come back later." She replied, "I would rather give you a piece of my porch than those damn bulldozers." Portions of that porch as well as other found objects from the area compose the foundation of CITY PLANNING.

This along with other experiences influenced me to use symbols to express the complexities of urban development. There can not be progress without destruction.

Monuments are but only testaments to those that erect them or tear them down.

The title CITY PLANNING is a satirical contradiction of the recklessness, and ruthlessness that developers and City Governments often have in their planning of our future environments.

CHASE YARBROUGH



"CITY PLANNING"



"CITY PLANNING"

# CITY PLANNING

WHAT IS A MONUMENT?  
WHAT IS ITS DURABILITY?  
WHAT IS ITS SIGNIFICANCE?

THIS SCULPTURE BEGAN AS A SINGLE PEDESTAL PIECE. THE MORE I THOUGHT ABOUT THESE COMPLEX QUESTIONS, THE MORE COMPLEX MY IMAGES BECAME. AS A RESULT, THE PEDESTAL PIECE GAVE WAY TO AN ENVIRONMENTAL STATEMENT SURROUNDED BY THOSE SYMBOLS OF THINGS THAT CONFRONT US IN EVERYDAY LIFE.

## THE SYMBOLISM OF CITY PLANNING

BIRDS: THE "YES" BIRDS — PEOPLE BEHIND THE POWERS THAT BE.  
CRESCENT DOMICAL SHAPE (AT TOP): REFERS TO THE CLICHÉ IN MODERN ARCHITECTURE OF USING AN ARCHITECTURAL MOTIF INDISCRIMINATELY TO THE POINT OF BOREDOM.

CLOCK: TIME—PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE.

PHOTOGRAPHS: THE DESTRUCTION AND/OR CREATION OF MONUMENTS MAY OR MAY NOT BE CONSIDERED A FORM OF PROGRESS.

DOLL ARMS AND LEGS: THOSE THAT LIVE, WORK, AND DIE IN THE MONUMENTS.

KEYHOLE: INSIDE — A TYPICAL PLANNING COMMITTEE.

CHASE YARBROUGH  
SCULPTOR

### *A SPECIAL THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING:*

FINE ARTS EXPRESS, FORT WORTH, TEXAS  
FOR MATERIALS AND MORAL SUPPORT

GUARDIAN PACKAGE, GARLAND, TEXAS  
FOR STYROFOAM

TEXAS PAINT AND SUPPLY, DALLAS, TEXAS  
FOR PAINT

SOUTHWEST PROPERTIES, DALLAS, TEXAS  
FOR SPACE AND TOLERANCE

CITY OF DALLAS FOR MATERIALS

TAYLOR PRINTING, DALLAS, TEXAS FOR PRINTING

STRUCTURAL AND STEEL PRODUCTS, INC., FT. WORTH  
FOR GUARD RAIL

JAMES DRAKE  
Exhibition Checklist

"SOF" 1987

charcoal, ink, graphite on paper and steel

drawing 60"x69"

sculpture 29"x23"x73"

courtesy of the artist and the Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, Texas

"PLATINUM COUNTDOWN" 1986

Steel 120"x60"x84"

Courtesy of the artist and the Texas Gallery, Houston, Texas

"DRESSING TABLE" 1986

Steel 84"x32"x24"

Courtesy of the artist and the Texas Gallery, Houston, Texas

"TRIPTYCH" 1985

(A) "GUARDIAN OF THE FLOWER" (left hand panel)

Steel 90"x66"x18"

(B) "MONA" (central panel)

Steel 90"x66"x18"

(C) "TWO PORTRAITS" (right hand panel)

Steel 90"x66"x18"

Courtesy of the artist and the Texas Gallery, Houston, Texas

"WALK-IN FILE CABINET" 1983

Steel 72"x96"x96"

Courtesy of the Adair Margo Gallery, El Paso, Texas

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CHASE YARBROUGH  
Exhibition Checklist

"CITY PLANNING"; environmental construction: 1987

## JAMES W. JOHNSON

### Exhibition Checklist

#### Sculpture:

1. "Missy"; wood, oil, mixed media: 65"x28"x24"; 1987
2. "Caspar"; wood, mixed media: 82"x24"x58"; 1986
3. "Mr. Suitcase"; wood, mixed media: 26"x41"x12"; 1987
4. "Neil"; wood, mixed media: 83"x65"x35"; 1986
5. "Lucy"; wood, mixed media: 102"x60"x50"; 1986
6. "Mr. Bat"; wood, mixed media: 22"x42"x22"; 1986
7. "Leroy"; wood, mixed media: 84"x72"x48"; 1986
8. "Mr. Snake"; wood, mixed media: 16"x70"x8"; 1986
9. "Camille"; wood, oil: 60"x17"x15"; 1987
10. "Sandy"; wood, oil: 51"x16"x31" (sitting); 1987
11. "Mr. Scorpion"; wood, mixed media: 13"x36"x24"; 1987
12. "Cleo"; wood, oil: 99"x28"x33"; 1987
13. "Devon"; wood, oil, mixed media: 68"x25"x22"; 1987
14. "Mr. Parrot"; wood, mixed media: 70"x15"x13"; 1987
15. "Ben"; wood, oil, mixed media: 80"x36"x14"; 1987
16. "Russ"; wood, mixed media: 64"x40"x35"; 1986
17. "Gator"; wood, paint: 17"x81"x14"; 1987
18. "Christine"; wood, oil, mixed media: 80"x50"x7"; 1987
19. "Bobo, the Reaper"; wood, oil, mixed media: 96"x33"x33"; 1987
20. "Runner"; wood, paint: 53"x153"x18"; 1987
21. "King Bat"; wood, marbles, paint: 80"x140"x57"; 1987
22. "Miss Suckerbug"; wood, mixed media: 23"x34"x24"; 1987
23. "Mr. Spider"; wood, mixed media: 17"x39"x26"; 1987
24. "Mr. Airwaves"; wood, TV shell, oil: 40"x92"x30"; 1987
25. "Spidey"; wood, TV shell, oil: 30"x72"x60"; 1987
26. "Ossie"; wood, TV shell, oil: 80"x22"x48"; 1987
27. "Buzz"; wood, oil, TV shell, mixed media: 61"x56"x28"; 1987
28. "Mr. Mantis"; wood, TV shell, oil: 65"x85"x38"; 1987
29. "Dale"; wood, mixed media: 69"x24"x18"; 1987
30. "Drac-in-the-Box"; wood, mixed media: 35"x22"x18"; 1987
31. "Jack-in-the-Box"; wood, mixed media: 33"x10"x12"; 1987
32. "Cat-in-the-Box"; wood, mixed media: 24"x11"x24"; 1987
33. "Alley Cat"; wood, mixed media: 56"x82"x24"; 1987

#### Paintings:

34. "Power"; oil on canvas: 84"x44"; 1987
35. "Beauty"; oil on canvas: 66"x45"; 1987
36. "The Perfect Yard"; oil on canvas: 44"x24"; 1987
37. "Ben's Girl"; oil on canvas: 60"x48"; 1987
38. "The Rape Artist's Self-Portrait"; oil on canvas: 48"x60"; 1987
39. "The Rape Artist visits the park"; oil on canvas: 66"x46"; 1987
40. "The Rape Artist at the picnic"; oil on canvas: 30"x80"; 1987
41. "The Rape Artist's Wife"; oil on canvas: 66"x46"; 1987

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contemporary Art for San Antonio would like to thank the many people who have made this exhibition possible and who have helped support the concept and an environment in which contemporary art can thrive. Especially for this exhibition we would like to thank first of all our three artists: James Drake, James W. Johnson, and Chase Yarbrough. Also a special thanks to the following people who have made a special effort to assist in the success of this exhibition and catalogue. They include Future Akins, Tommy Eaton of CopyRight Printing, Lubbock, Larry Francell, Fredericka Hunter of the Texas Gallery, Houston, Adair Mango of the Adair Mango Gallery, El Paso, and Victoria Mikulewicz.

Chase Yarbrough would like to extend a special thanks to those that helped make his project possible:

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Dallas Pediatric Neurology Association

Finally, we are most thankful for the support of Lake-Flato Architects, Inc., San Antonio, Texas who have in part, acted as sponsors for this exhibition.

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