



a natural state

Artist: Pearl Fryar

Video 6: The Land, Part B: Background

Fryar: I came here on my job—that's why I'm here. I'm not from Bishopville. I'm originally from Clinton, North Carolina. And after military school and all, I ended up in New York. And I went to work for National Can, which became American Can, and today it's Rexam. And I was...I went from New York, Atlanta, Bishopville. So when I came to Bishopville, I knew...I had no family here. I have no family here. You've got to imagine living in New York, you're living in Atlanta, and when I came to Bishopville, there was...there was only a Kentucky Fried Chicken. And I think any time you move to a town and there's not a McDonald's, it's small.

And so I came out and I bought this piece of property. And I decided, well, I'd create this garden and get "yard of the month." And that was the beginning of what you see today, in fact. I wanted the "yard of the month."

Everybody's just so amazed because...I mean, I get visitors from all over the world. I don't advertise it, and it's by word of mouth, Internet. And you've got to remember, this started from a cornfield. And I had no intention of taking it to this level when I started.

But then you do meet people that make a difference. The first person I met was Jean Grosser. She's the art professor at Coker College, and she began to bring her class over every year—and she's been doing it for years—and have them do sketches. And she always informs them, "This is art."

And then around '85...'86, maybe it was...she introduced me to Polly Lafitte, which was the curator at the State Museum. And they did a show called "Self-Taught Artists," and included my work into that show. And we moved a plant from here to the State Museum.

But the only difference in mine is that it's been well documented. One of the most interesting pieces was done by Beryl...Beryl Dakers...because she caught it when I was beginning. But, I mean, if it had not been for people like her, Polly Lafitte, Beryl Dakers, Polly Lafitte, and Jean Grosser, this place wouldn't be here...no doubt about it. But they were such an inspiration, and I thank them today for that.