

Rare Visions 1106
Caption file transcript
CaptionMax
December 8, 2007

(male announcer)

Production funding for Rare Visions and Roadside Revelations has been provided by:

(female announcer)

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(man)

_ Welcome to a show about things you can see __ without going far, and a lot of them are free. __ If you thought there was nothing __ in the old heartland, _ you ought to hit the blacktop __ with these fools in a van. __ Look out; they're driving hard, __ checking out art in their own backyard. __ Randy does the steering so he won't hurl. __ Mike's got the map, such a man of the world. __ That's Don with the camera, __ kind of heavy on his shoulder. __ And that giant ball of tape, it's a world record holder. __ Look out; they're driving hard, __ checking out art in their own backyard. __ Look out; they're driving hard, __ checking out the world in their own backyard, __ checking out the world in their own backyard. _

(Don)

Dear TV Mailbag, are we late for the race? Hi, Don the camera guy here, actually aware that the great Kinetic Race finishes in Ferndale on Memorial Day weekend, which this is not, but all year long, you can look in on some of the rigs that have run in the race started back in 1969 by one Hobart Brown. And while you're looking, you can look in on what Stan Bennett is building as well. Stan is shooting out sparks back here to make metal move, which moves more metal, which in turn makes more motion. That's why they call it kinetic and kind of hypnotic. Stan works on commission. That's why he only has a few pieces around, and that's fine, because, race or not, the road does beckon and beckons us on to the Avenue of the Giants... Oh, man, smell that.

(Don)

Giant redwoods, that is, the real stars of this show, though even they get roped into some pretty silly things, things that, as you can see, we just can't resist but, thanks to that roof rack, cannot fully participate in either, leaving those TV weasels, shall we say, stumped and watching the auto action from afar.

(woman)

That's it. Okay, go ahead, Jake. You're okay, Jake.

(man)

The guy's a pro.

(Don)

Oh, wow. So about now, I'm thinking it's time to try a new backseat. I got to go to the bathroom. [laughter] We're almost there. Are we there yet? Are we there yet? Guess my new adopted family has grown tired of me already, so it's back to the Freestar for a few more miles of scenic Humboldt County. Mother Nature is

amazing, but we're ready now to see more art, the self-taught, grassroots, outsider kind this show seeks to find and would seem to have found right here in Redway in Reuben Sorenson's yard. Follow me. This is-- this is my cars. I had a dream of one car. I thought it was important-- it was real intense-- and so I made it. I made the red car. And I just looked at it. And then I decided I need some more, so I made 500 more. I made like Henry Ford, you know? And I had--I make skeletons out of cardboard, covered those with papier-mâché. And while they were drying, I made more skeletons, and then I had the next.

(Mike)

Now, did you say you don't drive? I don't drive. I'm a nondriver. Never driven. I was kind of a hobo when I was-- I dropped out of high school at 17 and caught a freight train to the West Coast and just kept going back and forth for years and years and years.

(Randy)

Art classes? Art school?

(Reuben)

I just had art classes in elementary school and high school, but no art school. I've always had a pencil in my hand or something. Yeah, paint.

(Mike)

Yeah, what are these?

(Reuben)

Some paintings I did. It's the story of a journey. Somebody takes a journey, has adventures.

(Randy)

I love the basketball players.

(Reuben)

Well, thank you. Again, it's visionary. It's like something I saw. It wasn't something I liked. It's something that I did because it needed to be expressed, so it was a vision I had. Which board is that?

(Reuben)

This one?

(Mike)

Yeah, the one there that's with the-- is that a big bear or a dog? Mm-hmm. I'm looking for a key here to help. Exactly.

(Randy)

Yeah, and you can keep looking. Yeah. Scrabble fan? A fan of the alphabet. These are really a meditation, I think. It's between figurative and abstract. I go for not making it so figurative that you can tell what it is, but not making it so abstract that it isn't figurative anymore. I think I know what these are, and then I look more closely at them, and they're almost like alien versions of things that I might know or hieroglyphs. How am I doing? That's right, yeah. You're doing good; keep going. My intensions are just to get down what I see, and then I'm in the same position as you are, basically. I don't know what they mean either. I find out too. They teach. Then the painting teaches me. Then I say what does this symbol mean to me after it's done, not before. People say I'm prolific, but it goes real slow. I don't know if I'm prolific. I guess so. I just always do it, so it builds up, you know? I like it when people like my stuff, but that doesn't influence what I will make next. In other words, if somebody says, "Oh, I like the basketball players," that doesn't mean, "Oh, I'll work on basketball players now because people like them." No.

(Randy)

I like the basketball players. [laughter]

(Reuben)

If the basketball players would be the visionary experience that I'm having today, then I would be painting them. You can't just have a vision. It more or less has you.

(Don)

Reuben's right, you know? A journey with adventures is still the best story going. And sure enough, we have to move on, but why we have to move on before I get dessert is a mystery to me, but next thing you know, we're out the door and knocking on another, a most unusual one at that. A whole new meaning to that sleeping like a log phrase, huh?

(Don)

Boy, it's like a woody Airstream. The good news, I guess, is, we're not staying here. The bad news? There's many miles before we sleep.

(Randy)

193, baby.

(Don)

We did indeed cover a great deal of ground last night. And speaking of ground, the terrain here has changed considerably, though our mission has not, which is why we're scoping out Auburn in pursuit of some mega sculptures sculpted by one of the city's dentists. And this has to be them. These are the Amazon warriors. See, this is the Amazon archer, and that's the Amazon warrior. She had placed her spear like that and would charge a lion or a tiger. And she would place her spear and impale the tiger on this.

(Mike)

So where does a dentist get the feel to make these?

(Kenneth)

Well, okay, when you're in dental college, we had to do a carving to check our technique, see if we're good enough for school. And I carved a little balance wheel out of a watch. That's where it all started.

(Randy)

When was the first one built?

(Kenneth)

The first one? '69, the war memorial. The life size of the soldier holding the dead soldier in his arms. It changed-- that there is Freedom's Fair. She prays for her freedom, and he fights for his. I didn't put a loincloth on him because that might not be enough worldly possessions to suffice that he would not fight for his freedom. You don't see anything risqué about any of my things, any of them. And they all give a message. I did the gold miner because he discovered gold here. While I was studying at the state library on this Claude Chana, who he was, I came across the coolies what built the railroads over the mountains. I had to do this coolie for myself. I just had to do it, so I did a coolie.

(Randy)

I like this guy. Yeah, oh, that's the one I want to do. It's going to be 60 foot. I have steelwork even up for it. He's the man from the sea. Everything comes from the sea. See?

(Randy)

Come on. Don't be shy. Are you lucky enough to work from models?

(Kenneth)

Oh, yeah, I use all models. They say, "Oh, do you use pictures?" No, I don't use pictures. If they're nude, they're nude. Now, you are how old? 81. You're still working out here all the time? Yeah, I work at building. I'm just getting ready to do some ball reliefs and...

(Randy)

Are you still practicing dentistry? Yes, two days a week. Two days a week. Yep, eight, nine hours. Yeah. But wait a minute. You got to look at this wall. Actually, look at the rock in that. Yeah, it's okay, but there's a story in it. That's a woman. See their hand there? And see that? She's dropping the seed of life into the ground.

(Randy)

Neighbors? What do the neighbors say?

(Kenneth)

About this?

(Randy)

Yeah.

(Kenneth)

They've learned to accept them. There's a few that will always not like them. I like them. The Amazon archer has a 1 1/2 mile of reinforced steel in it. And I had friends who were bridge designers for the state, and they'd come by and give me constructive criticism on how to do these cambers and stuff. So she's not going to run off. Oh, no. No.

(Don)

Did you tell them how to do bridgework? [laughs] Very good.

(Don)

Score one for the camera guy. In fact, score three since the good doc loaded us all down with dental hygiene products, which should come in handy should we ever eat again. We bid him adieu and rolled out on an old gold rush road past Placerville's famed fence o' boots, which I'd have to admit sounded better than it looked. _ Boots weren't meant for taping, __ but that's just what I'll do. _ At any rate, it's a pretty drive, and pretty soon, you're in Sacramento, prompting a stop at the state capitol and an impromptu invitation to recreation for the big guy himself. Arnie! We got guest gloves.

(Don)

Left-handed, right-handed-- we've got them all. But the gov is a no-show, so on we go to Davis... Fine.

(Don)

Home of Toad Hollow: kind of cute, though somewhat worse for wear, as is the town's overpriced and underused toad tunnel. This calls for some clarification. They would get out on the roadway here by the thousands.

(Mike)

Wow, messy. I mean, you couldn't help but hit the poor things, but you felt kind of sorry for them. As far as the toad tunnel goes, that was a political payoff to get the overpass built. And the price varied from \$13,000 to \$20,000.

(Mike)

Wow. So if we wait here all night, we may never see a toad?

(Don)

Guess that would be a no, so we resume the driving portion of this show. Wine country, here we come. [cow moos] [indistinct conversing]

(Mike)

Let the record show, we have drunk none of the wine so far. We're spending viewers' money wisely.

(Don)

It could be we're just getting old. Besides, who wants to tackle turns like these with a hungover head? Actually, the roads were even worse back in the day when Litto Damonte first settled in Pope Valley, which helps explain how the first stop of the day came to be in the first place.

(Daniel)

The road was different. It had a big turn out here. The cars used to come by, and, going around the turn, their wheels would flex, and the hubcaps would pop off. So he would take the hubcaps and hang them on the fence so that when the people came back by, they'd, "Oh, there's my hubcap." The problem was, is that it seemed to work in the opposite way, that people thought he collected them, so they started bringing him hubcaps. So he just kept hanging them. He had his little table and his chair right here. And then this is, like, the original tree with all the original hubcaps that he started. Like, these are the really old ones, so the real collectors want to come and get those. And we tell them those are off limits. So, like, these ones are the cool ones, you know?

(Mike)

Yeah? And we have the Mazda plastic. Boring. Plastic. Metal. A little bit cooler.

(Daniel)

We were raised in San Francisco, and we would come up here every weekend and all summer, and that's what we did is, we hung hubcaps and, well, tried to stay out from underneath his feet.

(Randy)

Did he have very specific places he wanted the hubcaps put, or was it just, "You kids go out there and"--

(Daniel)

Yeah, he was the director, and he was the one that set them. And he would direct you where they would go, so... Yeah, and then, you know-- then he added on, like, toilets and just pretty much anything and everything that you-- you see all the signs? Those were, like, things when we were teenagers, we found them, and we brought them to Grandpa.

(Mike)

"Found them." Yes. For a long time, we didn't allow anybody to take hubcaps, but then my brother Mike, who lives here, kind of adjusted things, and he's kind of assumed the role of my grandfather, you know? So, yeah, he started allowing people to take hubcaps as long as they would bring back more than they took.

(Shannon)

We get all kinds of tourists. Some guys just came from New York. They went and stopped by the yo-yo museum first before they came here. And we get people from Holland, because we're in some tour guide. I love the tourists. I mean, it's really fine. Sometimes I don't really have time to look for a particular hubcap for them, but I will try if I have the time.

(Mike)

He never charged admission, though, or anything?

(Daniel)

No. It wasn't about making a buck for him. It was just about making a friend, it sounds like. I was--well, like the plaque out front says, you know, that he was here.

(Don)

We see that, and we say, "Hail to the king." It's nice to know that hubcaps are here if you need them, but this time, we don't, so off we go past more grapes and even a geyser on our way to Sebastopol. Here on the outskirts, this metal bovine is just the tip of the town's sculptural iceberg. Dozens and dozens of junk metal pieces are popping up all over, thickest of all on Florence Avenue, making the guy who creates them one very busy man. The timer's on right now. You've got one hour, so shoot. Whatever you want to ask, I'm all yours.

(Don)

No, we can't stay that long. [laughs]

(Patrick)

I'm not trained at all. I'm a self-taught outsider, you know, in the full strength, because I've never been to art school. I've always just did what I thought was good, you know? And I just believe in what I did. I'm a French-speaking Canadian. Moved here eight, nine years ago. I had a beautiful-- and I still have a great career as a ceramist, but I felt like doing something-- something bigger, something crazier. That was the first piece I did. And I put it in front of my house, and I had no clue of what was going to happen. California does that to you, you know, that feeling of no limits. And I never thought it would turn into what it is. I thought I'd make one and the city would kick me out, the town would just say no more of this crazy stuff, but to my incredible surprise, they actually encouraged me. It's made with a hot water heater.

(Randy)

Low millage. [Patrick laughs]

(Randy)

Only sits out here on Sunday.

(Patrick)

I don't think I'd be able to get as much leeway if I wasn't recycling, and it's really something that I hold strongly to my heart, because I want to be-- I'm a recycler, and I-- it's just that in my other life, I never thought I could make a living making recycled art.

(Mike)

Well, let us point out we still have 53 minutes left. Yeah, okay, so you want to do something? Enough of talking head. Okay, this house has a lot of recycled material, meaning that, you know, it's an old Victorian, but, like, for instance, the paint on the floor is old car paint. The lights are from a hospital. The bed is made with an old gazebo. It really has a nice graveyard kind of look to it. Yeah, everything is made from stuff we found. And sometimes it sits in the house for a little while. Then I take it outside and slap it on one of my sculptures. I take everything that's metal, so if somebody calls me up and has a truckload of metal, I'll take it. I make a vow to use as much as I can from the community.

(Mike)

But it's really public. I mean, when you do ceramics, only certain people see them.

(Patrick)

You're right. You're right. When I do a piece of ceramic, it goes into somebody's collection, and I get-- my gallery sells it up in New York or in Canada, and I get a check, and I'm really happy, and it's great, but that's it. When I make a piece, I bring it down on the bottom of my driveway, and I share it with my neighbors. And then somebody will buy it. That's it. Like, I feel like I'm a baker, you know? I'm just making them and just bringing them out. And I just get a thrill out of people slowing down. And it's really changed the whole atmosphere of the street now, because on weekends, you have all these tons of people that-- you know, they come from, you know, a lot of places. If you go to the cross street here...

(Mike)

Hockey?

(Patrick)

I was brought up in the hockey culture, so I did a lot of hockey-related stuff at times in my life, but now I live in sunny California, and nobody really gives--

(Don)

A puck. [laughs]

(Don)

Now, just for the record, Patrick did turn off the meter and let us linger longer. Maybe it was our own recycled creation, the world's largest ball of videotape, that turned the tide-- or the free T-shirt we tossed in. Turns out, lots of these light up too, but--and I almost hate to say it-- you'd have to stick around till dark, and we don't have time. Guess this town's not quite done with us yet. We've got one Ernie to go-- Ernie Fosselius, that is, a former filmmaker. Perhaps you've seen his Hardware Wars or Porklips Now. These days, Ernie's works are in wood, displayed in his own mechalodeon or hauled around town on his pedal-powered crankabout.

(Ernie)

The idea of this is that it's an open-air. You don't have to go inside this thing. And I can pedal it right down to the farmer's market here on Sunday, open the thing up, and then it sort of helps with that direct experience that I want people to have. I wanted it to be kind of creepy in a way like--you know like at the carnival when they have the thing, like, "Step up and see the giant pig," or whatever it is? You don't really want to, but you're attracted, but you're repelled, you know, so... Some people like it; some people don't, you know? It's like with most of the things I do. Some people are amused; some people are not

amused. Okay. [crank scrapes] [laughs] If you're making movies or doing animation or something, you're sitting in a room by yourself, basically. And this, you know you want to share it with people, and yet you don't want to, like, impose it on them. I'm sort of the reluctant barker, you know? Ladies and gents, step right, uh, wherever you want to step. You know, that's a good spot. I don't care.

(Mike)

These come out quick.

(Ernie)

Oh, to make them? You know, the question is always, "How long does it take to make one of these?"

(Mike)

I didn't ask it that way, though. No, I know. Oh, I'm saying-- [laughs] You're so defensive. I'm sorry. Give him a hug. Aw, jeez. [feet tapping]

(Ernie)

I never draw a plan or have a blueprint. I draw a little sketch and think, "Oh, this would be funny if this coffee went." And then she looked at her watch. That's the punch line. And it's not-- it's just trial and error, basically, so...

(Randy)

You're making all the gears yourself, though, right?

(Ernie)

Yes, everything's made. Yeah, everything I pretty much-- there's really nothing here that I haven't, except for the bicycle parts, you know. So that was the fun of it, is figuring out these kinds of gears. I just never want to sell them, because I don't want to build another one to replace it-- you know, the same thing. I just want to build a new thing and then add it to this. And it's kind of backwards in terms of, you know, modern economics or whatever, but I've never had an actual career. I've just done a series of jobs, thinking I was going to be doing that the rest of my life and then moving on, you know? This the kind of thing that inspires me completely. Profitable Hobbies. Here's a big suggestion for you. Peach pit sculptor. I think all politicians should wear their sponsors on their jackets the way NASCAR drivers do. [imitating Nixon] I'm a gangster, but I'm not a crook. This is all mechanical. It's just like the other things, you know? See how I make the hand go back and forth? And this hand goes up and down this way. And the feet move. This was the Arnold Schwarzenegger nutcracker. [imitating Schwarzenegger] Ja. Ja, just put a nut in there. Quarter pounder with Gs. [Mike groans] Gs, oh. [laughs]

(Randy)

Quarter pounder with Gs.

(Ernie)

It's an odd thing, because, you know, I respect the wood. I respect the trees the wood came from. And I'm grateful for it, but then again, I crank out some ugly piece of crap, and I kind of like it, you know? I think it's always been about the characters. Animation in Sesame Street, the early films, the puppets-- it's really about the characters. And that's what these-- so it's telling a story. So I really am still making movies, because really, these are three-dimensional hand-operated movies.

(Don)

Speaking of which, Ernie's dishing out DVDs and, with our travels in mind, a Zen GPS to assist. [laughs] You are here now. And there's a little hole you can look through to see where your feet are.

(Don)

This guy is amazing, and you haven't even heard his Walter yet. [Ernie whining] I can't understand you. You sound like some crazy old coot. Sure, you're taller than me, but I'm older than you.

(Don)

I may have met my match, but I am still Don the camera guy, signing off. I'll throw your leg out for you if you want me to.

(female announcer)

To learn more about the sights on this show and how to find them, visit us on the web at: DVDs, tapes, and a companion book to this series are available by calling: Ooh. Aw. Captioning by CaptionMax www.captionmax.com [exaggerated snoring] [Don imitating Curly] Hey, Moe. Did you try this one yet?

(Mike)

I haven't tried it yet. Oh, well, you have to try the politician. Oh, it doesn't do anything. [laughs] I get it. Are we going out, Doc? I don't want to be locked in here with you guys.

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