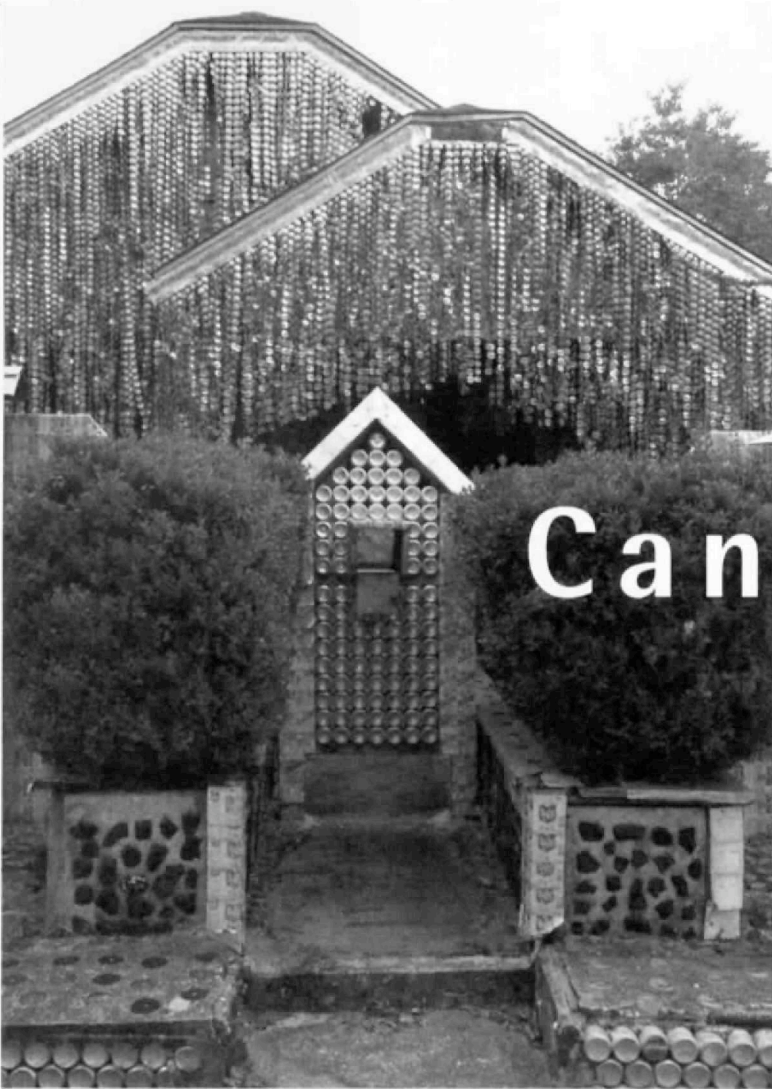


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Can Do

BY BARRY MOORE

JOHN MARTIN MILKOVISCH did not consider the transformation of his modest bungalow into the Beer Can House to be art. He thought of it as a pastime, and enjoyed watching reactions to his creation. "It tickles me to watch people screech to a halt," he said. "They get embarrassed. Sometimes they drive around the block a couple of times. I know my place changed the conversation in those cars."

Milkovich, a Southern Pacific upholsterer by trade, started his epic project in 1968. He began by covering the entire lot at 222 Malone Street with concrete, inlaying it with bits of rock, marbles, metal, and wood. "I got sick of mowing grass," he often claimed, adding, "I hate

which I should be sleeping but I don't." During those sleepless nights, he found creative ways to use the 40,000 empty beer cans he'd saved over 17 years.

It seems natural that after Milkovich's death, the Beer Can House should become a property of the Orange Show Foundation, a nonprofit dedicated to preserving, promoting, and documenting visionary-art environments. Last summer the foundation's Beer Can House Steering Committee began documenting the property, conceiving a conservation plan, and assessing the house's restoration and maintenance needs. It also began evaluating the merits of historical certification and of acquiring the vacant lot next door.

The architectural documentation has been completed under the direction of instructor Jim Arnold and fifth-year architectural student Kimberley Radich, both of the University of Houston's Workshop for Historic Architecture. The measured drawings and archival photographs were done to Historic American Buildings Survey standards, and will be placed in the Library of Congress. A conservation plan is also part of the package.

John Milkovich inadvertently created a nationally celebrated gem of folk creativity with his Beer Can House. With the stewardship of the Orange Show Foundation, visitors should soon be able to appreciate the site with all the senses — including a sense of humor. ■

to throw anything away." After the yard was finished, he shifted attention to his stockpile of aluminum beer cans. He used their tops, bottoms, sides, and tabs to make curtains, mobiles, fences, sculptures, windmills, and wind chimes. He wired them into long chains and hung them from the eaves, and used the flattened sides for shingles all over the exterior.

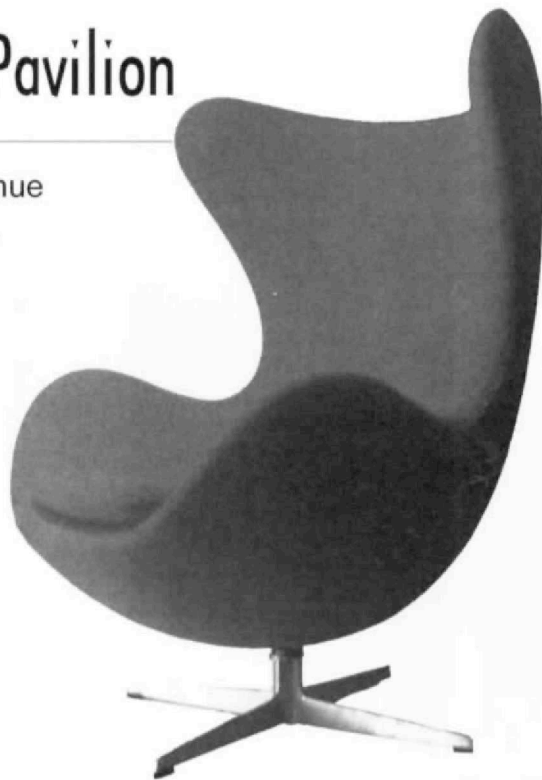
To explain the origin of his muse, Milkovich once said, "When I wake up and can't go back to sleep, that is when I think of all this crap. All those crazy things come to me during sleepless nights,

Pop-top preservation: The Orange Show keeps tabs on the Beer Can House.

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