

# Artist's Statement

I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN DRAWN to ruins with their textures and patterns of long use and decay. And the mysteries: who were the people and why did they leave? What were their stories? Sadly I watch many of our old structures on the plains slowly weather down, seldom given a second glance by tunnel-vision travelers and necessity-harried citizenry.

Land use and social structure on the southern High Plains have been and continue to be in a state of flux. In a wide-open country with a sometimes unforgiving climate, there is a danger in rushing from one discard pile of change to the next. Like our tunnel-vision traveler we are only caught up in the going, moving so fast we do not bring our stories and our culture with us. And by then, we are all too ready to believe that our land has no esthetic value, and our ruins can be forgotten.

Katherine Anne Porter said, "Art is what we find when the ruins are cleared away." I would say art is what we have when we allow ourselves to look into the ruins. Then we have an art that gives us a sense of where we have come from and thereby helps us shape a vision of where we are going.

This need for a personal and cultural sense of place has lead me to create my own style of regionally-inspired furniture—reliquaries of sorts—using cast-off lumber and hardware from the ruins. Like three-dimensional photo albums, the furniture pieces have become a way of telling some of the seldom-heard stories of just plain living on the Texas Panhandle. The desire to further explore the concept of the regional reliquary and to show the layers of memory sweeping through the ruins opened the door for "Art from the Ruins."

Full entry into the project came about through Arlene Price Walker's kind gift of the old Moore homestead, along with access to the May Wright archives. The commitment and tireless work of the Canadian [Texas] Arts Alliance brought the project to its full realization as a traveling art and history exhibit.

Nine months in the making, "Art from the Ruins" has, by turns, been exhausting and exciting, confusing and enlightening. I have been helped and cheered along by family and neighbors. And new directions have been revealed for artistic growth and ways of looking into the ruins.



*Doug Ricketts during salvage of Moore house*

*"And so there would always be more to remember that could no longer be seen. This is one of the things I can tell you that I have learned: our life here is in some way marginal to our own doings, and our doings are marginal to the greater forces that are always at work. Our history is always returning to a little patch of weeds and saplings with an old chimney sticking up by itself. And I can tell you a further thing that I have learned, and here I look ahead to the resting of my case: I love the house that belonged to the chimney, holding it bright in memory, and I love the saplings and the weeds."*