



Educational Resources **ART ENVIRONMENTS**

WHAT'S INCLUDED:

- A brief introduction to Art Environments
 - Reading materials created by Philadelphia's Magic Gardens (PMG) about Art Environments
 - A lesson plan created by PMG
 - Online and periodical resources for exploring Art Environments around the world
 - Books about Art Environments around the world
 - Children's books about Art Environments and their creators
 - A 10-minute video of the history of PMG and Isaiah and Julia Zagar
 - Films and videos about Art Environments and their creators
 - Other lesson plans
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INTRODUCTION

Isaiah Zagar, the creator of Philadelphia's Magic Gardens (PMG), often pays direct tribute to artists he admires most, sometimes by mimicking techniques or including their names in his work. Clarence Schmidt, Simon Rodia, Gabriel Joaquim dos Santos, Danielle Jacqui, or Nek Chand Saini are among the many names you will find at PMG. These artists all created Art Environments.

Art Environments are permanent, large-scale artworks that encompass an entire space and surround the viewer. Their creators often have no formal art training and use unusual materials to elaborately embellish their environments. Their work represents their extreme individualism and is influenced by personal experiences or mythologies. The artists' devotion to their creations is often all-consuming and spans years or decades.

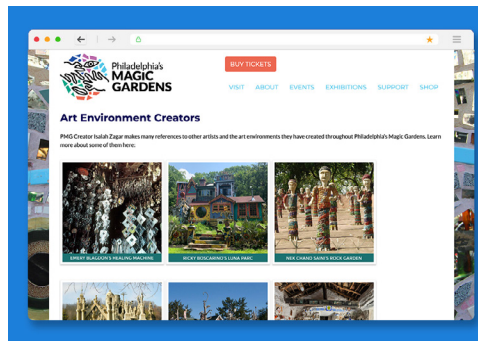
PMG is such a place. It covers five city lots, which Isaiah transformed exquisitely over the course of three decades. The space also serves as a tribute to other Art Environments and their creators. Every name is an invitation to another amazing world.



PMG RESOURCES

- A [brochure](#) which offers an introduction to Art Environments and how they came to influence Isaiah Zagar
- A [web page](#) which provides background information, photographs and videos about the many Art Environment creators referenced in the mosaics at PMG
- [*Philadelphia's Magic Gardens: The Dreamwork of Isaiah Zagar*](#), a coffee table book edited by PMG Executive Director Emily Smith, including photographs by David Soffa

Have fun exploring!



PMG LESSON PLAN

- [Mosaic Messages](#), a lesson plan that teaches students how to think critically about the environment and their impact on their community through paper mosaic techniques; recommended for grades 3-6, but can be adapted for other ages

FOR FURTHER EXPLORATION

- [SPACES Archives](#), the largest online resource dedicated to the study, documentation, and preservation of Art Environments and self-taught artistic activity; includes an interactive map for finding Art Environments anywhere in the world
- [Kohler Foundation](#), a philanthropic organization dedicated to the preservation of Art Environments, folk architecture, and collections by self-taught artists
- [The Art Preserve](#), an experimental exhibition space designed to house more than 35 artist-built environments from the John Michael Kohler Arts Center collection
- [Raw Vision](#), the world's only international journal of "outsider art" created by those who are "untrained, unschooled, or uninfluenced by the art world"

BOOKS

- [*Gardens of Revelation: Environments by Visionary Artists*](#) by John Beardsley (1995), particularly "Introduction: Gardens of Revelation," pages 7-33
 - [*Vernacular Visionaries: International Outsider Art*](#) by John Beardsley and Annie Carlano, in conjunction with Santa Fe's Museum of International Folk Art (2003), particularly "Imagining the Outsider," pages 10-17
 - [*Sublime Spaces and Visionary Worlds: Built Environments of Vernacular Artists*](#) by Leslie Umberger in conjunction with the John Michael Kohler Arts Center (2007)
 - [*Self-Made Worlds: Visionary Folk Art Environments*](#) by Roger Manley, Mark Sloan, and photographer Ted Degener (1997)
 - [*Fantasy Worlds*](#) by John Maizels (1999)
 - [*Destination Art: Art Essentials*](#) by Amy Dempsey (2021)
 - [*Gatecrashers: The Rise of the Self-Taught Artist in America*](#) by Katherine Jentleson (2020)
 - [*Outsider Art: Visionary Worlds and Trauma*](#) by Daniel Wojcik (2016)
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BOOKS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

- [*Beautiful Oops!*](#) by Barney Saltzberg with [*lesson plans*](#) (ages 3-8; 2010)
- [*The Big Orange Splot*](#) by Daniel Manus Pinkwater (ages 4-8; 1977)
- [*Bottle Houses: The Creative World of Grandma Prisbrey*](#) by Melissa Eskridge Slaymaker (ages 5-9; 2004)

- [*Hey, Wall: A Story of Art and Community*](#) by Susan Verde and illustrator John Parra (ages 4-8; 2018); also in [*Spanish*](#)
- [*In Mary's Garden*](#) by Tina and Carson Kügler (ages 6-9; 2015)
- [*Magic Trash: A Story Of Tyree Guyton and His Art*](#) by J. H. Shapiro and illustrator Vanessa Brantley-Newton (ages 5-8; 2015)
- [*The Postman's Palace*](#) by Adrian Henri and illustrator Simon Henwood (ages 8 and up; 1990)
- [*Rock by Rock: The Fantastical Garden of Nek Chand*](#) by Jennifer Bradbury and illustrator Sam Boughton (ages 4-8; 2021)
- [*The Secret Kingdom: Nek Chand, a Changing India, and a Hidden World of Art*](#) by Barb Rosenstock and Illustrator Claire A. Nivola (ages 7-10; 2018)
- [*The Seventh Most Important Thing*](#) by Shelley Pearsall (ages 10 and up; 2015)
- [*The Wonderful Towers of Watts*](#) by Patricia Zelver and Frane Lessac (ages 2-5; 2005)
- [*The Wooden Garden of Romano Gabriel*](#) by Deanna Enos and illustrator Phil Enos (ages 6-8; 2008)
- [*Unbound: The Life and Art of Judith Scott*](#) by Joyce Scott, Brie Spangler, and illustrator Melissa Sweet (ages 4-8; 2021)
- [*Yayoi Kusama Covered Everything in Dots and Wasn't Sorry*](#) by Fausto Gilberti (ages 4-7; 2020)
- [*Yayoi Kusama: From Here to Infinity!*](#) by Sarah Suzuki and illustrator Ellen Weinstein (ages 10 and up; 2017)

VIDEOS

- [Introduction to Philadelphia's Magic Gardens](#), a 10-minute overview of the history of PMG and Isaiah and Julia Zagar
 - [Bricoleurs](#), an hour-long documentary about US Art Environments by Hanna Volbeda, which opens with an interview with Isaiah Zagar
 - [Journeys into the Outside with Jarvis Cocker](#), a BBC 4 series hosted by the former frontman of Pulp as he travels around the world to visit Art Environments and their creators; [episodes 1](#), [2](#), and [3](#) aired in 1999
 - [Rare Visions and Roadside Revelations](#), a long running PBS series that uses road trips to explore the work of American visionary artists, much of which no longer exists; PMG appears in the episode titled "Bethlehem, PA to Newark, NJ"
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OTHER LESSON PLANS

- Niki Charitable Art Foundation [lesson plans](#), particularly [assemblage portraits](#) and [plaster sculptures](#), inspired by Niki de Saint Phalle, creator of The Tarot Garden; visit <http://nikidesaintphalle.org>
- The Visionary Arts Collective's [lesson plans](#), particularly [drawing prompts](#) for upper elementary and middle school students and [art making assignments](#) for high school students that encourage online research, slow looking, and personal reflection on concepts from this [list](#); visit www.visionaryartcollective.com

