

Emery Blagdon

By John Zorn



In the past century the human spirit's great need for the creation of art has come sharply to the fore - not through the commercialized vulgarity that is now the *art market* (my GOD - how could anything so high sink so LOW?), but rather through the intimate obsessive worlds of artists (outsider or otherwise) who create for themselves and themselves alone, without thought of monetary gain, public approbation or acceptance of any kind. The rich and varied tradition of the Great American Eccentric is both under-appreciated and under documented, largely because the work has predominantly

been done in secret. As long as we retain our sacred rights of privacy, it is impossible to really know what is lurking behind that closed door.

The discovery of great art now occurs often as happenstance, by accident. Behind an apartment door: **Henry Darger's** *Realms of the Unreal*; behind a closet door: **Morton Bartlett's** astonishing photos and dolls; behind a garage door: **James Hampton's** *Throne of the Third Heaven of the Nation's Millennium General Assembly*. The discovery of the world of **Emery Blagdon** behind a barn door in Nebraska was a find of major import and magnitude. Compelled to create a world of healing machines to stave off illness, **Emery Blagdon** gave light and meaning to his life through wire, tinfoil, and a variety of organic and inorganic materials. These machines, and the paintings that helped power them, brought down and focused healing energy to allow **Blagdon** to continue living. Did he create to live or live to create? As with all true artists, the answer is either elusive, or both - but in **Blagdon's** case it is particularly poignant because just a few months after his machines *stopped working* he tragically passed away.

His work is all that great art is - honest, imaginative, technically proficient, cathartic - in a word: transcendent! Although originally lit in a web of Christmas lights within the dark recesses of his Nebraska barn, the works themselves are lit from within by a spirit of genius and passion - and in turn light the

world with a healing energy of love, grace and power. After living in close proximity to several of his deliriously complex sculptures for many years now, it is easy to attest to the power of good that **Blagdon**'s creations emanate. They glow, delight, and -in the right atmosphere -cleanse and cure mind, body and spirit.

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