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Prolonged Panorama © 2007 Anthony Thompson Shumate & Robert Ziebell

NEW PUBLICATION from **ARTPIX**

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LAS POZAS: STEPS & FALLS

Interactive panoramas of the surrealist garden created by Edward James in Xilitla, S.L.P., Mexico.

Directed and photographed by Robert Ziebell.

Designed and programmed by Anthony Thompson Shumate.

Featuring over 20 panoramic tours embedded with 36 videos.

www.stepsandfalls.com

ARTPIX is pleased to announce the publication of *Las Pozas: Steps & Falls* - an interactive disc that brings the Mexican fantasy garden of **Edward James** to virtual life. Inspired by the vision of Edward James, and encouraged by curator and art historian Walter Hopps, **Robert Ziebell**, in collaboration with **Anthony Thompson Shumate**. Mr. Ziebell and Mr. Shumate together have spent the last three years photographing, designing and programming *Las Pozas: STEPS & FALLS*. With this project Ziebell and Shumate have created a unique virtual environment through an archival art documentary and video experience that puts the viewer into the garden itself with many choices to make and surprises to discover.

Using a camera and tripod that allows for photographing 360° views, Ziebell recorded over twenty of the sites in the garden including the structures **Puente de Bambú**

(Bamboo Bridge), Casa de los Pericos (House of the Small Parrots), Veredera de Las Serpientes (Path of the Snakes) and the Plaza de Don Eduardo. The resulting panoramas can be directed by the viewer to allow one to look completely around at any given location as well as look up through the jungle canopy overhead or down at the concrete steps and platforms that are underfoot. The viewer then starts to make his own decisions about how to enter the garden. Glowing spots on a map show the way and once “inside” there is a continuous enticement to proceed to another spot or to discover what else might be hidden in the images. Embedded in each site location are “passages” to other locations in the garden or to short video clips that are more personal notations about the atmosphere of this special place.

The interactive disc can be accessed either in English or Spanish. Upon opening the disk a short film sets the scene for the tour. These and four other narrative clips were generously donated from writer Pat Sharpe’s **TEXAS MONTHLY** article on **LAS POZAS** (*OUT OF THIS WORLD* April 1998) and help give understanding to the creation and making of the garden.

Echoing the experience of walking through the jungle up long stair ways that criss-cross one another and which wind along the side of a low mountain waterfall, the title *Steps & Falls* is a play on the children’s game of *Chutes and Ladders* as well as the fact that the viewer can interact with the disc to explore the site and make new discoveries. The title can also be literal description of the garden.

The sounds of cicadas and rushing water are prevalent at Las Pozas (the pools), and deep rainforest sounds permeate the jungle at night. These ambient sounds are found on the disk as well as surprises such as the startling crowing of a rooster and the squeal of pigs from the nearby village of Xilitla. This calliope contributes an atmospheric feeling bringing the panoramas to life and underscoring the experience of almost being there.

Edward James, a British aristocrat born in 1907, was a patron and collector of the arts as well as a poet and a visionary. He collected the work of the Surrealists and was a great supporter of Salvador Dali, funding the “El Sueno de Venus” Pavilion at the 1939 New York World’s Fair. In time he moved from England to Los Angeles and finally in the late 1940s to the village of Xilitla, Mexico, in the state of San Luis Potosí. Here he built a jungle paradise with the help of his friend and architectural collaborator, **Plutarco Gastélum (1914-1991)**. Together they fabricated whimsical pavilions and enclosures on the side of a waterfall along the Huichihuayan River in the Sierra Madre. Using concrete and rebar, local craftsmen were able to fabricate symbolic shapes and organic designs using hand made wooden forms that related to a private cosmology predicated on surrealistic influences. Many of the forms echoed the naturally occurring plants and trees of the area and indeed the structures themselves look to be an outgrowth of their own surroundings. Most of the structures would be considered “follies”, a particular English tradition of buildings never to be used for practical purposes but for amusement and surprise. Edward James died in 1984 in Italy. The garden is open to the public and is under the direction of his son, Kaco Gastélum and a newly formed foundation to help preserve the garden.

Las Pozas: Steps & Falls is dedicated to the memory of **Walter Hopps (1932-2005)** whose own visionary ideas and pleasures in art found resonance with the singular vision manifested in the garden.

Las Pozas: Steps & Falls has been funded by major grants from Houston Endowment Inc. and Prop Foundation, Inc. as well as by donations from SBC Mexico, Susan O'Connor and others.

Robert Ziebell lives and works in Central Texas and **Anthony Thompson Shumate** lives and works in Houston, TX. **Ian Glennie, Fredericka Hunter** are **ARTPIX**, a non-profit publisher of art related multi-media publications, in Houston, TX. Previous ARTPIX publications include the series *ARTPIX Notebooks* – The Photographs of Billy Sullivan; Robert Whitman: Performances from the 1960s; Trisha Brown: Early Works 1966-1979; William Wegman: Video Works 1970-1999.

Examples of *Las Pozas: STEPS & FALLS* can be seen at:

www.stepsandfalls.com

The disc can be purchased on the site, MICRO CINEMA or at AMAZON.

www.microcinema.com

www.amazon.com

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