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Sidebar: Charles Simonds

Charles Simonds (b. 1945), who has engaged performance, film, objects and environmental works, is best known for minuscule dwellings that he built of unfired clay and installed on window sills and in vacant lots in New York's Lower East Side. He concocted the myth of the Little People, imagining an entire culture and its rituals represented by seemingly abandoned sites. The work was shaped by his interest in Southwestern American Indian cultures and also by his attraction to clay, which he described as "a sexual material—symbolically as the earth and physically the way it behaves."¹ He has also made larger ceramic pieces that allude to generation and growth or, oppositely, to erosion and destruction. The early outdoor works referred to oppressed peoples and drew an analogy with the inner-city neighborhoods where they were sited.