Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

George Nelson's Kodachromes of Simon Rodia's Watts Towers, 1976 and 1978

Allon Schoener · Wednesday, November 12th, 2014

New York-based George Nelson was one of the most widely acclaimed American industrial designers of the 1950s and 1960s. He is best known to us today through the regular appearances of his designs for Herman Miller furniture, and the Howard Miller bubble lamps and bubble clocks you can find at Staples and Design Within Reach.

Nelson wasn't an avid photographer, yet he created an archive of thousands of Kodachrome images documenting, in many cases, ordinary objects that he found interesting. Trained as an architect at Yale, these color photographs represent the world as he found it, not the reordered world of architectural design. One can understand why he was attracted to Simon Rodia's eccentric architectural masterpiece, the Watts Towers. Designed and built solely by Rodia, a Sicilian immigrant ceramic factory worker, its existence was threatened at the time that Nelson took these photographs.

A few of these images could be described as documentary providing a clear record of what one might see at the site. The majority were created in the camera. For anyone who has seen the Watts Towers, these photographs will evoke its compelling magic. For those who have not seen it, they will generate a desire to go there, see it and share in its brilliance.

(Click each image to enlarge.)

These images of the Watts Towers, taken by George Nelson in 1976 and 1978, were derived from 35mm Kodachrome slides, the majority of which were originals.They were scanned on an Epson V-500 scanner with these settings: 300 dpi and 48 bit color.

This entry was posted on Wednesday, November 12th, 2014 at 3:12 pm and is filed under Film, Architecture, Visual Art
You can follow any responses to this entry through the Comments (RSS) feed. You can leave a

response, or trackback from your own site.