

# Georgia Department of Natural Resources

## Historic Preservation Division

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

## **Pasaquan Listed in National Register**

ATLANTA (September 23, 2008) –Pasaquan, located on State Road 78 in Buena Vista, Marion County, was listed in the National Register on August 27, 2008. The Pasaquan Preservation Society and the Marion County Historical Society sponsored the nomination and prepared the nomination materials.

Pasaquan was the artistic creation of Eddie Owens Martin, a fortuneteller, self-taught artist, and native of Marion County. In 1957, Martin inherited the family farm outside of Buena Vista and spent the remainder of his life transforming the farm's buildings and landscape into a work of visionary art. Today, the Marion County Historical Society owns and manages Pasaquan.

Pasaquan is significant in the area of art and architecture because it is an excellent example of a 20<sup>th</sup>-century American visionary art environment. Visionary art purports to transcend the physical world and portray a wider vision of awareness including spiritual or mystical themes, or is based in such experiences. Martin's art expresses the connection he saw between a person's physical self, their spiritual creator, and their environment.

Pasaquan is significant in the area of religion because of its direct association with Martin whose art transcended his folk beliefs. Folk religion is a personal faith that can be shared communally but typically originates from an individual who experiences direct conversations and/or life-altering communes with God. Pasaquan, the name Martin gave his religion, blended elements of Christian symbolism, eastern religions, Caribbean voodoo, and spiritualism. Martin sought balance in a life that teetered between principles of Bible Belt Georgia, New World

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visions, and the dogmas he absorbed. As an expression of religious beliefs, Pasaquan appealed to a small segment of the local African-American community, a limited number of poor whites, and thousands of pilgrims who sought his counsel. Pasaquan attracted few if any devoted followers. Martin's religious message was revealed through his seductive voice and vivid imagery which survives in his art.

Pasaquan contains six buildings and eight structures located approximately 3.5 miles west-northwest of Buena Vista. The son of poor sharecroppers, Martin ran away at the age of 14 bound for New York City. Martin lived there for 35 years and returned to Georgia in 1957 to settle on the four-acre family farm that contained a 1880s saddlebag-type house. In 1959, Martin, aided by several local African-American men, began the process of transforming this farm. Martin created a work of visionary art that today is recognized internationally by critics as a unique masterpiece. The art consists of a series of vividly painted concrete walls and buildings. A self-taught artist, Martin's art reflects his religious beliefs that stressed humanity's ability to communicate directly with God and his humble "cracker" social origins. Martin funded his art by telling fortunes, selling marijuana, and offering counseling. Martin committed suicide in 1986 after suffering from poor health for several years.

The National Register is the federal government's official list of historic buildings, structures, sites, objects, and districts worthy of preservation. According to Richard Cloues, deputy state historic preservation officer, listing in the National Register recognizes a property's significance and ensures that the property will be taken into account in the planning of federally funded or licensed projects. In addition, owners of National Register properties may be eligible for rehabilitation tax incentives.

The Historic Preservation Division (HPD) of the Georgia Department of Natural Resources serves as Georgia's state historic preservation office. Their mission is to promote the preservation and use of historic places for a better Georgia. HPD's programs include archaeology protection and education, environmental review, grants, historic resource surveys, tax incentives, the National Register of Historic Places, community planning and technical assistance. For more information, call 404-656-2840 or visit their Web site at [www.gashpo.org](http://www.gashpo.org).

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