

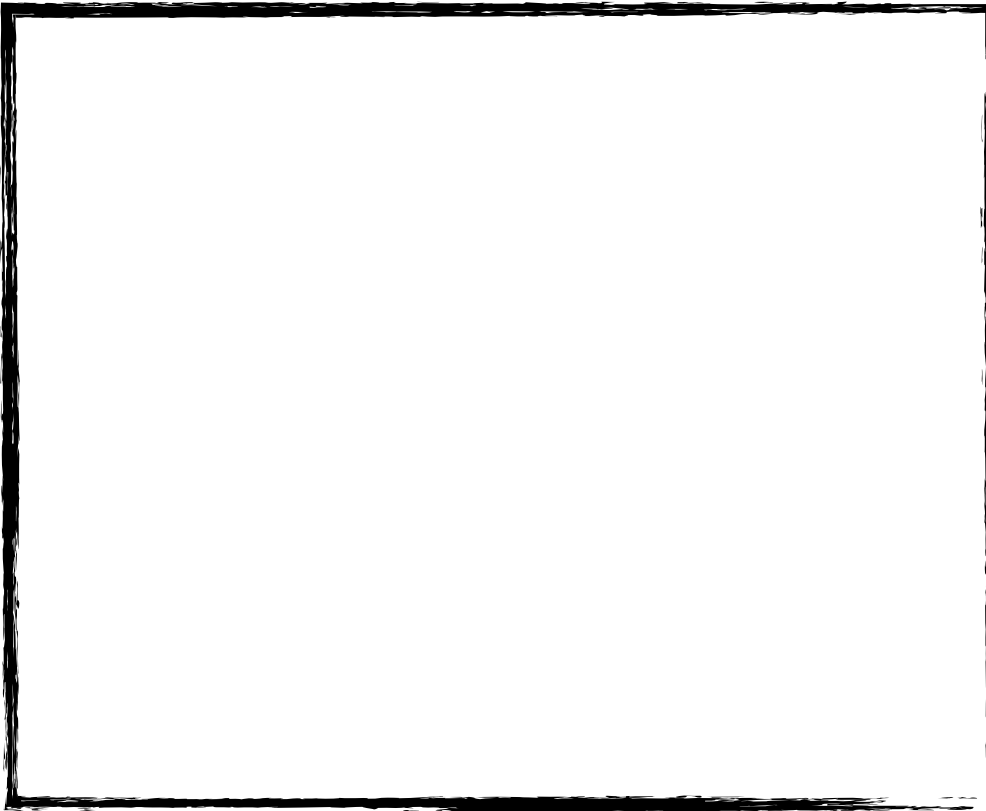


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## Try this!

Artists like O.L. Samuels create large scale, abstract sculptures that have an important significance to them. Try to create your own in the box below; you may include your interests, favorite colors, or all of the colors to create you own "Godzilla"!



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# O. L. Samuels

Vernacular Artist

## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Written & Designed by Zhiju Liu



Ossie Lee "O.L." Samuels was born on November 18, 1931, in Wilcox County, Georgia. A wood sculptor, he was given his mother's last name because his West Indian father was an undocumented immigrant to the U.S.

At a young age, Samuels had a difficult home life and ran away from home to make a living in farms, although he spent most of his time homeless. Samuels also worked in a textile factory, for the railroad, was a professional boxer, and a tree surgeon. In 1982, while working on a tree carving, Samuels was seriously injured leaving him in a wheelchair for three years. This left him in a state of great depression until he recalled his grandmother's advice, "*when the mind gets tangled up, when they get worried, carve on a wooden spool,*" and thus his artistic career began.

All his carvings are inspired by his active imagination of mythical creatures and dreamlike figures. Samuels' favorite animals to carve are horses, which he says are the proudest of all animals. His carvings are from wooden objects that include tree trunks, old wooden furniture, and roots. Despite being color-blind, he usually paints his sculptures using a speckled finish to decorate them, using all the colors available to him.



Samuels, now 85, is a lay minister living in Moultrie, Georgia with his wife Gladys, where he uses his living room as an area for his sermons and a workshop for his spiritual carvings. He is considered one of the most talented self-taught artists in America, exhibiting his artwork in museums across the country. Samuel's work is part of several permanent collections including the Smithsonian American Art Museum in Washington, D.C., the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore, Md., the Georgia Museum of Art, the Museum of American Folk Art in NYC, and Arkansas Arts Center.

## Questions for Discussion

Find "Godzilla" in the 2nd floor galleries and use these questions to discuss the artwork with your group.

1. What is your first reaction to this sculpture?
2. Artists shape the story of their art by creating a mood. What is the mood of this sculpture?
3. What do you see in the sculpture?



O.L. Samuels, *Godzilla*, n.d., paint, wood, 29 x 84 x 23 inches, Gadsden Arts Center & Museum Permanent Collection, 2009.1.6

Godzilla is a 7-foot tall sculpture carved by Samuels. This imaginary creature is made from a discarded telephone pole and is part of a husband and wife set of these beasts. Godzilla is the female, and her husband, according to the artist, "now lives in Atlanta, Georgia."

## Glossary

**permanent collection** - a collection of artwork owned by a museum

**sculpture** - art that has 3 dimensions. Stone, metal, ceramics, and wood can all be used for sculptures

**mood** - the feeling or emotion of something

**vernacular art** - art made by untrained artists in response to their environment and experiences