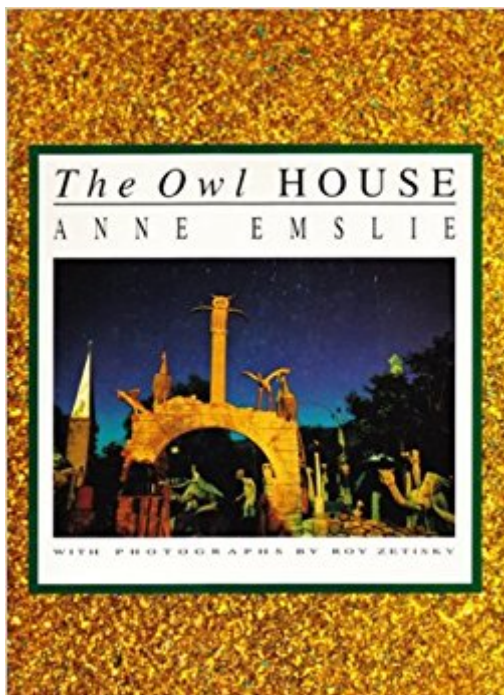


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The Owl House



Synopsis

Nieu Bethesda is a small, dusty village in the hills of the South African Karoo, not far from Graaff-Reinet and the plains of the Camdeboo. It was here in the dwelling known as the Owl House, that the artist Helen Martins was born and spent her childhood. As a young woman she later returned to the house to care for her aged parents, and after their deaths she continued to live there. It was at this stage in her life, during the 1950's, that she began radically to alter the interior of the house and to transform the yard into a sculpture garden. Eventually the transformation of house and yard became so dramatic that it could be experienced as an integrated environmental artwork. Helen Martins' expansive and eclectic vision embraces numerous cultural and religious sources, and the Owl House is not a simple place to understand. It was the inspiration behind Athol Fugard's play "The Road to Mecca" and has become a popular off-the-beaten-track tourist stop-over, particularly since obtaining national monument status.

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