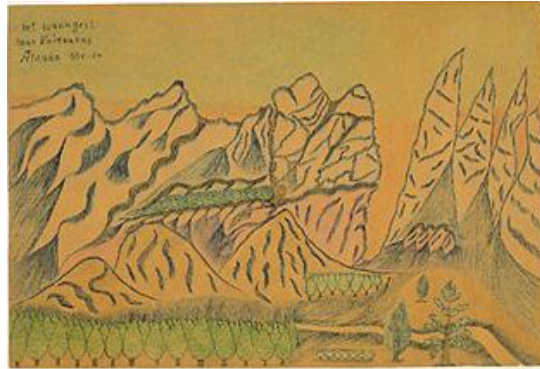


Allison, Diane, Caitlin. "Joseph Yoakum at the Beginning: The Show at 'The Whole,'" *Raw Vision 16*, November, 1996.

# RAWVISION

## Joseph Yoakum at the Beginning



...The story of how the art of Joseph Yoakum first came to the public eye begins with a window, just as his life begins at Window Rock 'where I were born' as one of his titles says. As if his whole life was set to be a metaphor where every stone wall had a window to escape through. From his own words, his story begins when he ran away, and in time his feet walked every continent except Antarctica, from circus to circus, from town to town, from job to job. He loved to name the names of those places, when he told of those travels. But in 1967 Joseph Yoakum, 79 (or 81, depending on your source) found himself living alone in a tiny storefront on 82nd Street near Stony Island Avenue in Chicago. He had hit the stone wall of age. 'A middle class black community. A decent neighborhood,' says a neighbor. But Yoakum didn't feel safe on the streets at night. He had to stay in the small room and the nights were long. There was no getting past this wall. 'I thought I would go crazy.' He told the reporter.

According to Phil Hanson, Yoakum woke up one night, ill. He was impelled to draw, as if in a vision. He realized when it was done, that he had drawn a picture of Golgotha. He had never drawn before. 'He always said it was a spiritual unfoldment. He had his Science and Health there.' said Hanson. A passage reads, 'There is no life, truth, intelligence in matter. All is infinite Mind, and its infinite manifestations, for God is All-in-all.' No matter. Only meaning, unfolding spiritually. He found the window in his visions, unfolding as he drew them. And once he started, he couldn't stop. That was in 1962. By now, in '67, his shelves were piled high with his visions, drawn with ball-point pen on paper purchased at the local Woolworths, then colored in 'like a coloring book' with colored pencils and polished down with a little wad of toilet paper. He decided to string a line across the window and clothes-pin some drawings there. Maybe sell some.