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Gilda Williams on Noah Purifoy's 'From the Point of View of the Little People'

'Purifoy conjured life from practically nothing: ten pairs of used trousers, discarded trainers, a few spare planks'

G BY [GILDA WILLIAMS](#) IN FAN LETTER | 23 JAN 19

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Noah Purifoy, *From the Point of View of the Little People*, 1994, installation view. Courtesy: Noah Purifoy Foundation © 2019

Ten men stand tall, perched above the Joshua Tree desert. They line up wearily along a rickety wooden bridge – though it might be a hangman’s scaffold. Twenty lifeless feet all point in the same empty direction. Shoes are battered; jeans ripped by the relentless wind.

Their torsos are completely missing, chopped clean at the waist. Twenty legs stand like sun-bleached columns, like broken caryatids. With their wood-stick skeletal frames sometimes pitifully exposed, they are ghostly – desiccated travellers whose train never arrived.

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For 15 years, the elderly artist/teacher/social worker Noah Purifoy single-handedly constructed his tumbleweed-strewn Outdoor Desert Art Museum of more than 100 junk sculptures. The place feels miraculous, with strange Biblical overtones: the self-exile in the wilderness; the Old Testament names of Joshua and Noah. With *From the Point of View of the Little People* (as this staggering sculpture is titled), Purifoy conjured life from practically nothing: ten pairs of used trousers, discarded trainers, a few spare planks. Perhaps, five years into his desert solitude (‘a breeze compared to many things I’ve been through’, he said), Purifoy was assembling a set of friends, or mute witnesses. Or a tireless audience, offering the artist a perpetual, silent, much-deserved standing ovation.

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