



Jacob Lawrence, Builders, #4

Raised to the Trade: Creole Building Arts of New Orleans

When they literally raise buildings out of the ground, those structures are certainly the products of strength, might, and force. The features that so delight our eyes flow from fine skills honed by years of customary practice. What they fashion for us is nothing less than the contexts of our daily experiences. By creating sturdy structures, building tradesmen provide us with a reassuring context in which subsequent civilizing acts might flourish; culture commences from the sense of place that flows from their diligent command over mundane materials.

The following excerpts are taken from "Precious Work: Creativity in the Building Trades of New Orleans" a catalogue essay by John Vlach, Ph.D. Photographs courtesy of Neil Alexander.