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THE BOTTLE CHAPEL AT AIRLIE GARDENS: A TRIBUTE TO MINNIE EVANS:
A Pictorial Guide to the Installation Designed and Built by Virginia Wright-Frierson
Text by Fred Wharton, with an introduction and epilogue by Susan Taylor Block

Paperback with hinged cover, 7 x 9, 32 pages, more than 50 color photographs. \$19.95.

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From 3D to 2D: The Bottle Chapel at Airlie Gardens Brought to the Page

Minnie Evans was more than a gatekeeper to Wilmington's historic Airlie Gardens; she is considered one of America's most important visionary artists. Drawing and painting for Evans was a highly religious experience, and she believed she was called to draw by God. While employed at Airlie Gardens from 1949 to 1974, Evans created some of her most intriguing work. Using whatever supplies she had, usually wax crayons, she depicted, in vibrant colors and symmetrical patterns, leaves, flowers, statuary and mystical creatures. Minnie Evans lived long enough to know of her fame yet it did not faze her. She continued to draw until her death, on December 16, 1987. It seemed only appropriate that her life and work be commemorated in the garden. "It was therefore an inspired decision," as author Fred Wharton writes, "to create the Minnie Evans Memorial Sculpture Garden—a garden within the garden, in the very place where she worked as a gatekeeper, where she experienced her visions and where she created her art."

Now Airlie's beloved memorial to Evans has been brought to the printed page. In this full-color book, Fred Wharton chronicles the inspiration, design and intense, year-long construction of the installation, including its centerpiece, a 17-foot-high, seven-sided chapel sculpted from thousands of glass bottles, cement and metal armature by lead artist Virginia Wright-Frierson. Usually a painter, Wright-Frierson said that the idea for a bottle chapel came to her from a bottle structure that existed in her own garden. As Wright-Frierson told Wharton, "Minnie Evans has inspired all the artists in this area, and I felt that this tribute should not be just one artist's efforts, but a collaboration of art works dedicated to her." To create a fitting memorial, vibrant with the symbolism and elaborate designs found in Evans's work, Wright-Frierson assembled a team of North Carolina sculptors to interpret the

artist's themes in various media. With more than 50 full-color photographs and a narrative based on interviews with contributors, including Hiroshi Sueyoshi, Tejuola Turner, Michael Van Hout, Karen Crouch, Brooks Koff, Dumay Gorham and gardening expert Barbara Sullivan, this book collects, for the first time, the story of Minnie Evans, her visionary art and the garden that now memorializes her.

The book was the result of collaboration with The Publishing Laboratory at the University of North Carolina Wilmington, the department of creative writing's publishing imprint, which involves students in the "real-world" business of book publishing. Under the direction of Publishing Laboratory director Emily L. Smith and former director Barbara Brannon, Master of Fine Arts students handled the book's editing, design and production.

The book is available in retail bookstores regionally or directly through distributor John F. Blair (www.blairpub.com or 1-800-222-9796). The book is also available for trade distribution nationwide.

Fred Wharton, a native of Great Britain, taught Elizabethan drama at Glasgow University in Scotland, and then at Augusta College in Georgia, where he chaired the English department. A member of Airlie Gardens Guild, he is married to Rosemary DePaolo, Chancellor of the University of North Carolina Wilmington.

Susan Taylor Block, a Wilmington native, is the author of a number of Wilmington history books including *Airlie: The Garden of Wilmington*. Currently Airlie historian, she served as a screenwriter for the documentary *Beneath the Airlie Oak* and is a published poet.

Virginia Wright-Frierson earned her Bachelor of Fine Arts in painting from the University of North Carolina Greensboro and furthered her studies in Cortona, Italy, New York, and Arizona. She and her husband, Dargan, settled in Wilmington in 1977. Her record includes more than 30 exhibitions in the southeastern U.S. as well as Italy. Her work is included in museum, private and corporate collections. In addition, she has written and illustrated children's books and has received numerous public art commissions.

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