

LIFE

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
TV TURNS 50



BOMBS ON PLANES

A CHILLING EXPOSE OF U.S. AIRPORTS



AN EXPLOSIVE
NO BIGGER THAN THIS
KILLED 259 PEOPLE
ON PAN AM
FLIGHT 103



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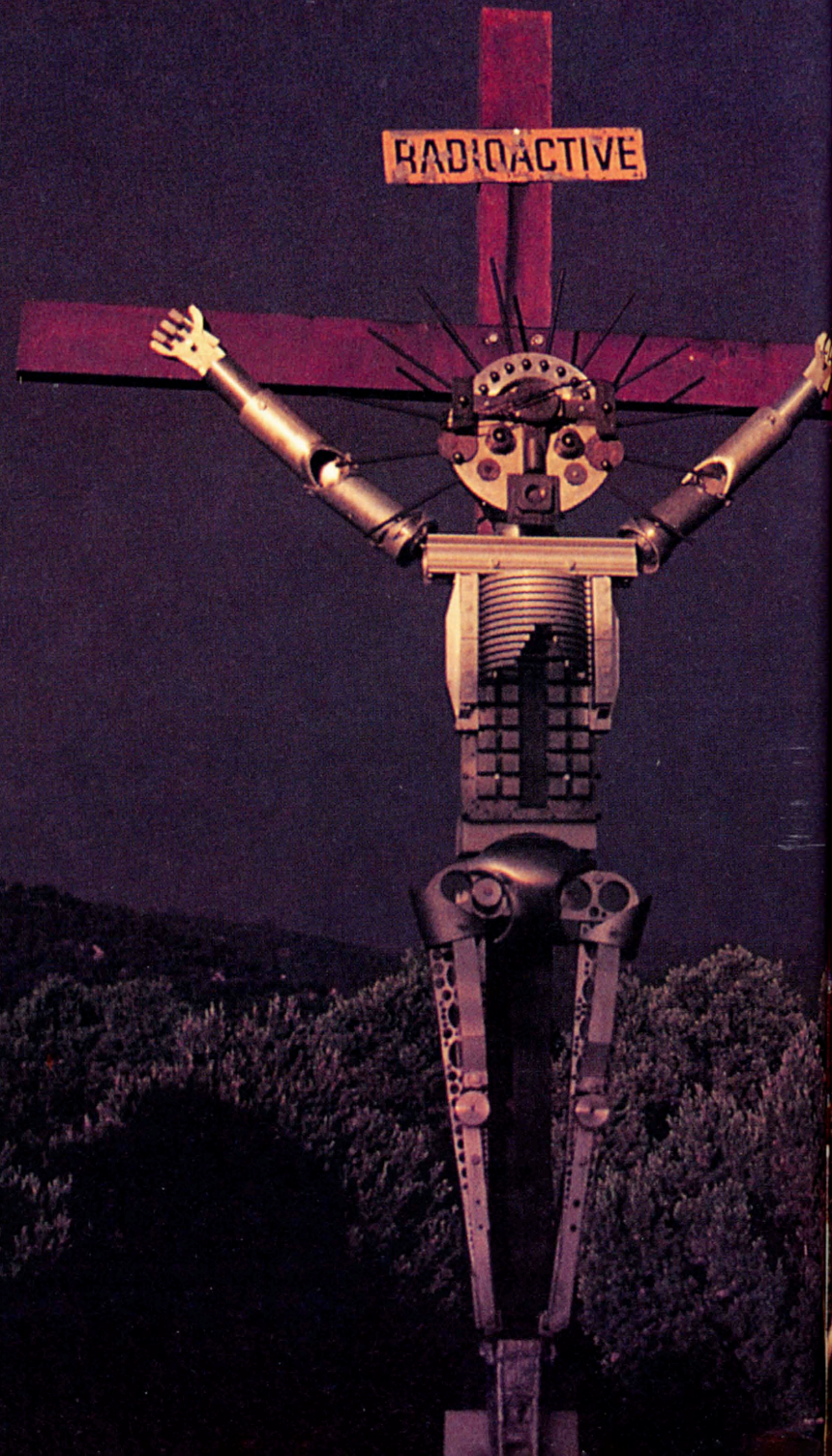
174 MISCELLANY

Cover photograph
by Alexander Tsiaras

ART

A Heavy Metal Message

Scraps from atomic weapons are used to make antinuclear sculptures



PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER MENZEL
REPORTING: JOHN NEARY



A rainbow after a storm frames a work that the artist, Tony Price, calls *Nuclear Crucifix*. The 16-foot figure stands just outside the sculptor's home in New Mexico.



Near Santa Fe, N.Mex., in the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains, eerie robots loom out of the piñon and juniper scrub. They suggest icons of the world's religions—Buddhist, Christian and American Indian—and they have titles like *Hopi Nuclear Mudhead No. 1* and *Pontius Pilate Award for Washing Hands of the Nuclear Situation*. Grim humor is reflected not only in the names of these sculptures but also in the recycled materials Tony Price uses to create his works of art: The gleaming machined parts come from the Los Alamos National Laboratory, which does defense research and in 1945 produced the first atomic weapon.

In that year Price, the son of a Brooklyn stockbroker, was eight, and he began preparing for Armageddon. "The minute the bomb was introduced, a huge cloud was cast over the world," he says. "We've been living as nuclear hostages ever since." After being expelled from a prep school, Price joined the Marines. In the service he began painting murals and portraits. After discharge he worked as an illustrator in New York before moving west. There in 1965 a friend showed him some pieces of test-tube bottles found in the Los Alamos salvage heaps, where a scrap auction is held weekly.

Price went to see for himself and found what he calls "a perfect mound of art," piles of brass, stainless steel, aluminum, plastic and bits of electronics thrown away by scientists and technicians. Inspired by the aesthetic quality of this atomic junk pile, he bought some pieces and began to fuse them—his own way to beat swords into plowshares.

Price works slowly, sometimes taking a year to

find just the right part or juxtaposition of pieces. He welds, glues, drills and bolts until he has the effigy that seems most evocative. The pieces have an ominous beauty that has persuaded such notables as musician James Taylor, fashion designer Diane von Furstenberg and Hollywood's Dennis Hopper to pay upwards of \$3,000 per Price. The work has been shown in New York's Battery Park and at several galleries. Tommy Hicks of the Shidoni Gallery in Tesuque, N.Mex., explains, "Price is a very primitive artist using some of the most advanced technology. He's trying to turn out something good from something destructive." Price himself says, "It's a reverse voodoo system. It's my own catharsis of nuclear ten-

sion. I hope it turns other people on to an avenue where they can defeat the nuclear program." About 100 of his works are on display at Project Tibet in Santa Fe.

That the message of his medium is depressing may have a dampening effect on sales. Says Price, "We're usually running on the brink." His wife of 11 years, Donna, a painter, teaches karate to help feed daughter Zara, nine, and son Tem, three. Price supplements their income by carving marble and alabaster Indian statues for tourists. He also sells books, tools and other finds in a flea market. Extra money goes into buying more of the discarded parts at Los Alamos.

These days when he shops at the plant he takes along a Geiger counter. Although the technological detritus is supposed to have been tested for radioactivity before being sold, Price claims that a few years back one of his pieces, called "Atomic Queen," was literally hot stuff. □



Tony Price shows off one of his antinuclear war Kachina dolls, turned by sparklers into a nighttime fireworks display.

This group in the artist's backyard belongs to *The Last SALT Talks: A Trophy for the Winners of the Next Nuclear War*.