



WORLD'S LARGEST

Directed and Produced by Amy C. Elliott and Elizabeth Donius

76 minutes

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SYNOPSIS

Desperate for tourism, hundreds of small towns across the U.S.A. claim the "world's largest" something - from 15-foot fiberglass strawberries to 40-foot concrete pheasants. Odd, funny and sometimes beautiful, the statues stand as testaments to the uniqueness and importance – the largeness – that all people feel, and need to feel, about their communities and their own existence. *World's Largest*, a feature documentary, visits 58 such sites and profiles Soap Lake, Washington's four-year struggle to build the World's Largest Lava Lamp. By documenting these roadside attractions, *World's Largest* captures the changing landscape of small-town America.

FILMMAKER STATEMENT

"Our intention in making WORLD'S LARGEST was to create a portrait of a vanishing place and time - small-town America at this moment.

We started with towns that had built, or were building giant roadside attractions - meant to draw in visitors and to tell the world something special about the place they were built. These statues often pay tribute to the agricultural industries, which have now disappeared, leaving economic devastation in their wake. The conceit of the film is that we are answering this call for tourists, taking these towns up on their offer to visit, to learn who they are. From there, it was a natural progression to structure the film's narrative through the voices of the people we encountered on our visits.

At each location, we were met by mayors, chamber of commerce, representatives, amateur historians and longtime citizens eager to share their pride in their past and their sadness and confusion as they faced the future. Each story echoed the last and added a new dimension to our understanding of our story.

As our travels progressed from town to town, we found the same realities in each new place we visited. The question became, how do we tell this larger story of a vanishing culture?

The result, we believe, is a multi-layered tapestry of dozens of first person accounts that are candid, poignant, funny and sad; peppered with the images of these often beautiful statues and the vanishing world they were built to represent."

Amy C. Elliott and Elizabeth Donius



TOP SITES



Lava Lamp (proposed), Soap Lake, WA

This eastern Washington city struggles for four years to build the world's largest lava lamp. Once a thriving mineral lake resort town, they hope the project will attract tourists and provide some much-needed revitalization.



Boll Weevil, Enterprise, AL

This monument - a classical Greek figure holding a boll weevil – claims to be the only in the world to honor a pest. A century ago, a boll weevil infestation destroyed the local cotton crop and forced farmers to diversify into peanuts, a move that ensured their economic survival.



Olive, Lindsay, CA

The last vestige of the Lindsay Olive Company in this former company town. Located between the Olive Tree Inn and the Olive Tree Restaurant.



Lemon, Lemon Grove, CA

Once a literal lemon grove, this San Diego bedroom community now has only one orchard left. The Big Lemon in the center of town remains, witness to all the changes.



Cow 'Salem Sue', New Salem, ND

Erected to honor their economic lifeblood, Salem Sue perches on a high hill overlooking the tiny dairy community of New Salem. The town gathers every year for a pancake breakfast under the cow.



Peanut, Ashburn, GA

When Nora Lawrence Smith, a prominent resident of this Georgia community died, she left the seed money to build the world's largest peanut. The Chamber of Commerce and other locals banded together to finish the job and "fulfill Miss Nora's dream."



Killer Bee, Hidalgo, TX

The border town of Hidalgo gained notoriety as the first place in the country where killer bees were found. They "took their lemons and made lemonade out of them" – and erected the world's largest killer bee.



Cornstalk, Shelby, IA

Farmer Dwight Eckel shepherded the creation of his 'baby', this metal stalk of corn, which rises more than 78 feet high. His goal was to make sure that people driving by on the highway will always know that Iowa is where the tall corn grows.



Bull 'Albert', Audubon, IA

A tribute to the long-gone cattle industry in Audubon, Albert the Bull just celebrated his 40th birthday, complete with a giant cake. He is still a relevant symbol of the town, says mayor Sam Kauffman, "just like if all the automakers left Detroit, it would still be known as...the auto making capitol of the world."



Pheasant, Huron, SD

To kick off pheasant hunting season, residents of Huron meet at the world's largest pheasant to release a live rooster. The direction of his flight forecasts the success of the season, in this local version of Groundhog Day.



Apple (#2), Winchester, VA

The apple is a huge part of the cultural heritage of Winchester, having originally begun as a parade float in their famous Shenandoah Apple Blossom Festival. Today it sits proudly in front of one of the city's historic antebellum mansions.



Buffalo, Jamestown, ND

This concrete giant can be seen for miles away on the interstate, towering over Jamestown, the Buffalo City. Roaming free underneath the statue is a live buffalo herd.



Turkey - Frazee, MN

Frazee is on to its second turkey after the first was accidentally incinerated during some last-minute repairs to the statue the night before the town's annual Turkey Days celebration.



Paul Bunyans 1-3, Bemidji, Brainerd and Akeley, MN

These statues all vie for the title of "world's largest" in Paul Bunyan's home state of Minnesota. Bemidji's was first, Brainerd's talks, and Akeley's weighs in as the biggest.



OTHER SITES

Coffee Cup and Pot, Stanton, IA	Tiger Muskie, Nevis, MN
Coffee Pot (#2), Kingsburg, CA	Bluegill, Orr, MN
Apple, Cornelia, GA	Trout, Preston, MN
Egg (#1), Winlock, WA	Walleye (#3), Rush City, MN
Egg (#2), Mentone, IN	Lutefisk, Madison, MN
Bullhead Catfish, Crystal Lake, IA	Pecan, Brunswick, MO
Songbird, Mio, MI	Goose, Sumner, MO
Prairie Chicken, Rothsay, MN	Duck, Flanders, NY
Ear of Corn, Olivia, MN	Sandhill Crane, Steele, ND
Otter, Fergus Falls, MN	Dala Horse, Minot, ND
Loon, Vergas, MN	Walleye (#4), Garrison, ND
Loon (Floating), Virginia, MN	Catfish, Wahpeton, ND
Crow, Belgrade, MN	Jack Rabbit, Odessa, TX
Pelican, Pelican Rapids, MN	Roadrunner, Fort Stockton, TX
Turkey, Frazee, MN	Rattlesnake, Freer, TX
Black Duck, Blackduck, MN	Dime Box, Dime Box, TX
Walleye, Baudette, MN	Pecan (#2), Seguin, TX
Pike (#2), Deer River, MN	Strawberry (#2), Poteet, TX
Pike, Erskine, MN	Frying Pan, Long Beach, WA
Walleye (#2), Garrison, MN	Cow (Talking), Neillsville, WI



ABOUT THE FILMMAKERS

Elizabeth Donius and Amy C. Elliott, friends since childhood, have been working together on film and video projects for years. Other collaborations include the feature film *Headless*, and numerous segments on *Split Screen*, the television show hosted by John Pierson that aired on The Independent Film Channel. A professional photographer, Elliott's work has appeared in countless publications, including *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*. Donius is the former Executive Director of the IFP/Chicago and also worked for the PBS documentary showcase P.O.V.

CAST & CREW

Directed & Produced by: Amy C. Elliott & Elizabeth Donius

Photographed & Edited by: Amy C. Elliott

Original Music: Robert ToTeras

Cast: Gene Rima, Marina Romary, Freida Sebok, Brent Blake, Francis Jensen, Shelly Zorn, Robert Tienken, Roger Klusman, Felicia Sargeant, Ignacio Chevira, John Rosenberger, Lawrence Anderson, Alva Shoepf, Arlene Dodson, Helen Ofield, Mary Boecke, Vicki Dorn, Fred Daggett, Kenda Furman, Peggy Woolridge, Roger Hanson, Joyce Notaras, Burr Beckwith, Wayne Hovde, Eileen Beckwith, Michael Humann, Tex Weatherly, Joe Vera, John David Franz, Chuck Snyder, Wayne Shilson, Melanie Stepp-Coughlin, Pat Owsley, Annette Epperson, Bill James, Dick Hagen, Dwight Eckels, Effie McDermott, Roy Richards, Dean Winkjer, Albert Patterson, Bernest Brooks, Larry Herbst, Kelly Dittus, Melea Johnson, Al Lundberg, Nick Sebok, Carol Litzau, Ross Mickelson, Kenny Fett, Eric Dregni, Joe Klusmann, Charles Perry, Becky Larson, Howard Borgerding, Babs Bixby, Thomas Jatzlau, Paul Flanagan, Patsy Peters, George Sharp, Dan Owens, Jim Oliver, Harry Nolda, Erika Nelson, Kevin Grap, Harry Lampa, Cheryl Spragg, Christine Culbert, Una Boyle, Sam Kauffman, Elizabeth James, Jean Davis, Janie Henderson, John Zietz, Gary Sandholm, John Martin, Jan Paulsen, Kip Brandt, Sarah Fenner, Jim Manwaring, Frank Manwaring, Hazel Mickelson, Sue Brandt, Linnea Hirst, Josh Shields, Jane Ashnewitz, Katie Magozzi, Lisa Espinoza, Sarah Maher, Thomas Clabby

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Website: <http://www.worldslargestdoc.com/>