



YIELDS TO ART—Agostinho Rodrigues has abandoned profitable work to be an art teacher for the Recreation and Parks Department.

Times photo

L.A. Times May 19th 1966

Sculptor Leaves Firm to Take Art Teaching Job

PALMS — Agostinho Rodrigues, Portuguese-born sculptor, is abandoning his profitable industrial firm to become a dollar-a-year art teacher for the Los Angeles Recreation and Parks Department.

Rodrigues, 54, will teach his skills in designing and fabricating to patrons at recreation centers and at the Veterans' Hospital Rehabilitation Center, the Economic Youth Opportunity Authority Training and Employment Center and the Simon Rodia Foundation, which operates Watts Towers.

A city spokesman said the sculptor is recognized by industrial producers of plastics as an authority in using these materials to manufacture commercial art products.

He has developed techniques for binding ground glass from discarded bottles and other waste material with resins and other plastic products.

But he says he will begin devoting all his time to teaching to demonstrate his appreciation for this country, to which he was first admitted as a student during World War II.

Makes Plastic Filler

"As a man gets older he has to get busier," Rodrigues says. "You have to use all the assets you possess."

His practice of making plastic filler from broken wine bottles, castoff junk or beach sand, he says, may be traced to the days in his youth when he lived in abject poverty on the Portuguese island of Madeira.

His education was partly financed by the Salazar regime and partly by his work in an aquarium museum and a medical school's morgue.

Coming to New York in 1940 he built zoological models for the Museum of Natural History and was almost drafted into military service three days after he arrived.

The immigration waivers he signed then to avoid the Army have prevented him ever since from becoming an American citizen although he has tried repeatedly.

And he has just completed the design model for a massive exhibit of Blue Sharks for a museum in San Pedro.

Rodrigues lives at 3509 Keystone Ave. in Palms.