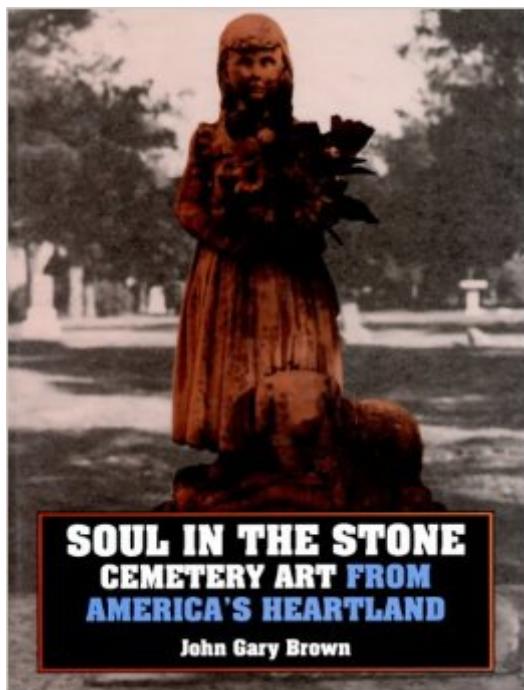


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# Soul In The Stone: Cemetery Art From America's Heartland



## **Synopsis**

John Gary Brown's richly evocative photographs remind us that cemeteries-shadowy markers of death and grief-also shine forth with life and art. By turns starkly sobering, nostalgic, provocative, and quirkily humorous, his photos capture the human spirit preserved in all of its amazing diversity. Celebrating master stone sculptors as well as grassroots and ethnic folk artists, Brown's striking images document the rich traditions of cemetery art as found throughout Wisconsin, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, Nebraska, Oklahoma, Colorado, and New Mexico. The art itself manifests a great many idiosyncratic forms and subjects including an Egyptian sphinx, a gigantic baseball, a salesman's suitcase, a rolltop desk, a car-engine shrine, plexiglass-enclosed dolls, life-size limestone statuary, hovering marble angels, elaborate wrought-iron crosses, along with more modest traditional motifs in etched-granite and concrete. Brown's own artistry and insights illuminate the ways in which these works embody or reflect personal grief, family relationships, religious and ethnic values, social status, occupations, avocations, aesthetics, as well as unrealized hopes and dreams. Both informative and entertaining, his book provides a haunting tribute to this neglected art form.

## **Book Information**

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Average Customer Review: 4.9 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (9 customer reviews)

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## **Customer Reviews**

My husband John and I love tombstone art and stomp around the countryside taking photos of cemeteries. This is one of our favorite books, with lots of wonderful photos of cemeteries around St. Louis and so forth. The author also writes a wonderful commentary on the nature of cemeteries,

their conditions, and how we view them today as a modern American society. The photos of the children's graves are especially haunting. A must for collectors of tombstone art.

John Gary Brown, does an excellent job at showing the eccentricity and beauty of grave markers. He uses different angles, and points of view in his compositions, to bring out a morbid beauty, that is rarely seen by the naked eye. A truly impressive collection of masterpieces. Just when you think the works speak for themselves, Brown also includes wonderful poetry, which co-exists perfectly with the photographs. A must for anyone's artistic anthology collection.

While the photography is excellent, and the author offers several interesting insights into symbolism and customs, the facts about particular monuments are incorrect. He gives the wrong locations for several monuments (placing them in cemeteries across town), and the descriptions of the cemeteries themselves contain errors

Ok, so not everyone is into the "darker" side of life. We prefer to focus on sunflowers, streams and good old-fashioned values here in the midwest. To many people, gravestones are just plain creepy. Haven't we all watched horror movies where the dead crawl out from beneath a cracked headstone and kill innocent lovers? Mr. Brown's book made me look at the gravestones in a brighter (although not unentirely SAD) light. I saw the loss that families suffered through in the intricacy of massive stone mausoleums. I felt the emptiness of parents in the lifelike sculptures of their children. And I shook my head at the quirkiness of folks whose death markers are every bit as weird as they themselves must have been. I've had this book for 5 years and I STILL pick it up now and again to read the stories behind the cemeteries. I have also given it as a gift to people in my life who I know won't get totally freaked out by it. They LOVE it. It is a wonderful read/lookat/whatever.... just try it!--

John Gary Brown's work is beautiful, haunting, and mesmerizing. It's a fantastic piece of inspiration that is a great jumping off point for writers and storytellers.

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