

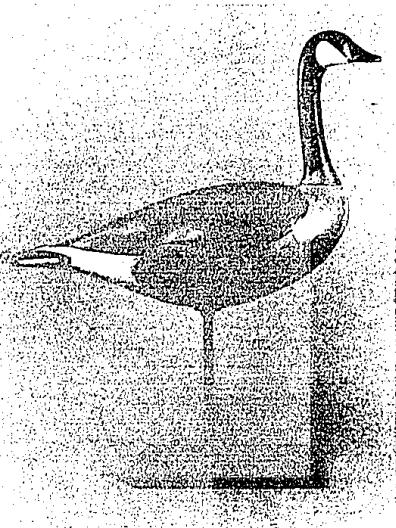
Creative Living

Mari McGee editor/591-2300

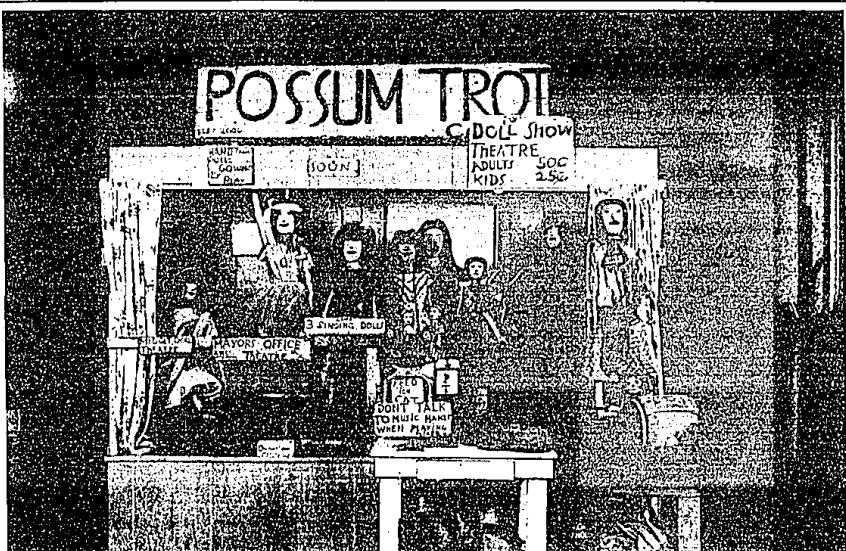


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Thursday, February 12, 1987 O&E



Jerry Mastin's Canada goose, "Sentinal," 1837 is one of the many stars of an outstanding exhibit of decoys at Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum through Feb. 22.



"Possum Trot, Midget Doll Theater," 1950, by Cal and Ruby Black, one of the major works in "The Ties That Bind" exhibition of contemporary folk art at Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum.

Folk art

Cranbrook Museum hosts watershed event

By Corinne Abatt
staff writer

FOLK ART'S APPEAL runs anywhere from cool socio-intellectual to hot emotional bordering on passion. Companion shows at Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum, "The Ties That Bind: Folk Art in Contemporary American Culture" and "The Decoy as Folk Sculpture," hit on two parts of the folk art phenomenon.

If there was any doubt about the local interest in folk art, it was erased at the recent symposium held in conjunction with the exhibition at the Museum. More than 200 attended the daylong event with a roster of speakers which included curators as well as collectors, who are often one and the same.

Michael Hall, sculptor in residence at the Academy, co-curator of the "The Ties That Bind," and folk collector extraordinaire, was the moderator for the symposium.

It was Dr. Eugene Metcalf, professor of interdisciplinary studies at Miami University of Ohio and co-curator

of "The Ties" with Hall, who put the subject into perspective.

"Attempts to define folk art are useless . . . the notion of folk art, as understood in the last half century, is outmoded." He said the 1972 folk art exhibit at the Cranbrook Academy of Art Museum set the standard and when it is coupled with this 1987 show by future art historians, "They may look back and see these as watershed events."

IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION so often posed to him, "what do you mean by folk art?" he drew a parallel between his subject and the variety of acts which take place under a large circus tent "spilling all over." But, he correlated it long enough to divide it into four major categories — historical, ethnographic, neoclassical and contemporary.

Since the title of Metcalf's presentation was "The Social Meaning of Collecting Contemporary Folk Art," he was more intent upon looking at the reasons people collect a certain kind of folk art than the reasons the art is made or marketed.

He said historical folk art, "which does not relate to the concerns of modern society" provides an easy escape for those who want to go back to a less complicated day of life.

Ethnographic folk art obviously would appeal to those with roots, European ties, and the neo-naïve satisfies a need for nostalgic images. Neo-naïve is essentially replicas of folk art of a former time.

"Contemporary (folk) art performs a different function. This art disrupts . . . it unsettles its audience . . . folk art, at its best, is remarkably demanding both intellectually and socially," he said.

In the discussion which followed, Pam Hill, co-director of Hill Gallery of Birmingham, said, "The folk artist does not intellectualize his art." She later commented, "Folk art is about originality and intense drive."

GEORGE MYERS AND WALTER SIMMONS II, who talked about the collecting of the above, the fun (bordering on addiction) of collecting, and the side benefits such as folk art-oriented travel and friendships. Herbert Walde Hemphill Jr., collector and former curator of the Museum of Modern Folk Art of New York

City, who has given a major part of his collection to the Smithsonian Institute, said graffiti, neon trade signs and photographs can be folk art.

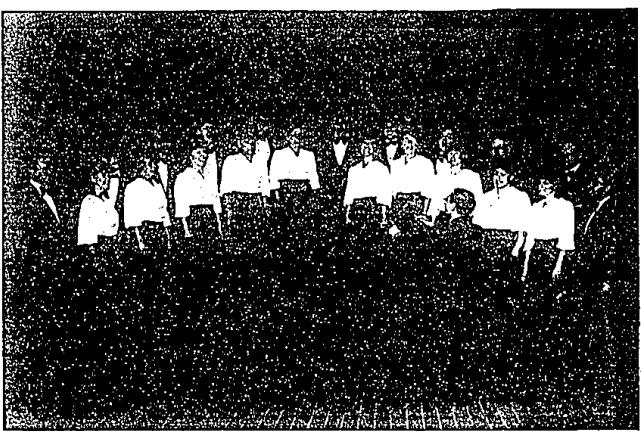
"Carnival art is a whole field of its own," he said.

Later, slides were shown of some of the pieces Hemphill loaned for the 1972 Cranbrook folk art exhibit, he answered questions from the audience.

When asked to explain why certain pieces attracted him, he said, "I don't analyze my aesthetics about each piece. I always wanted my collection to talk for me."

Later, he said when he sees a piece and feels a chill goes down the back of his spine, he knows it's something he wants. "I don't care if anyone else likes it if I think it's wonderful. It's gut reaction."

Four highly regarded collectors and authorities on decoys, Julie Hall, Tim Hill, Ron Swanson and Kluno Walsh Jr., showed slides of decoys and swapped stories about how they found them and, in some cases, how they were used and what they meant.



Singing their hearts out

For a special valentine's day treat, take your sweetie over to the Livonia City Hall auditorium at 3 p.m. Sunday when the newly formed Jorjeit Chorale will lift their voices in song. Admission is \$3 and tickets are available at the door. The event is sponsored by the Livonia Arts Commission. It's the chorale's first appearance in Livonia but

director Jorjeit is no stranger to the area. He is on the faculty of the Southfield Public Schools, Schoolcraft College and the University of Michigan. He is currently president-elect of the Michigan Music Educator's Association. Accompanist is Jane Branson, coach/accompanist for the Schoolcraft College Community Choir.

Computerized archive takes romance to heart

IF YOU'RE LOOKING for some helpful hints for finding your true love on Valentine's Day, the computerized folklore archive at the University of Detroit suggests you take a look at our fine feathered friends.

If you see a blackbird, you will marry a clogman. A goldfinch means that your spouse will be a millionaire, but a bluebird spells a life of poverty because your future mate will be far from rich.

If no birds are in sight, drop three balls of clay into a bucket of water. Each should contain the name of a likely prospect on a sheet of paper. The first one to rise will be your valentine.

DREAMS HAVE A magic of their own and if you want to spend a night with your true love, follow one of these dream-recipes before going to bed:

Put three bay leaves under your pillow. You're sure to dream of the person you will marry.

Or boil an egg in salt water. Then eat the whole thing, shell and all.

If that doesn't conjure up your future

spouse, it might help to add some audio-appeal. Try reciting this piece of folk-verse:

Good valentine be kind to me; in a dream let me my true love see.

The archive, directed by Professor James T. Callow, is the world's first computerized folklore collection and it includes thousands of items collected every semester by students of folklore. Since 1964, informants have been steadily enlarging and refining the archive with traditions from all over the world.

EGGS, FOR EXAMPLE, are widely used for the important roles they play in the serious business of courtship and marriage. Unmarried Polish and Hungarian girls used to give eggs, sometimes by the dozens, to their boyfriends. In Macedonia, engaged couples exchanged eggs as gifts while Russians and Indonesians used eggs at their marriage ceremonies.

However, if you're bounded by an unwanted valentine, relief may be only a salt shaker away. Salt, according to folk wisdom, can quiet a storm, bless a new house, cure an earache — and get rid of unwanted visitors.