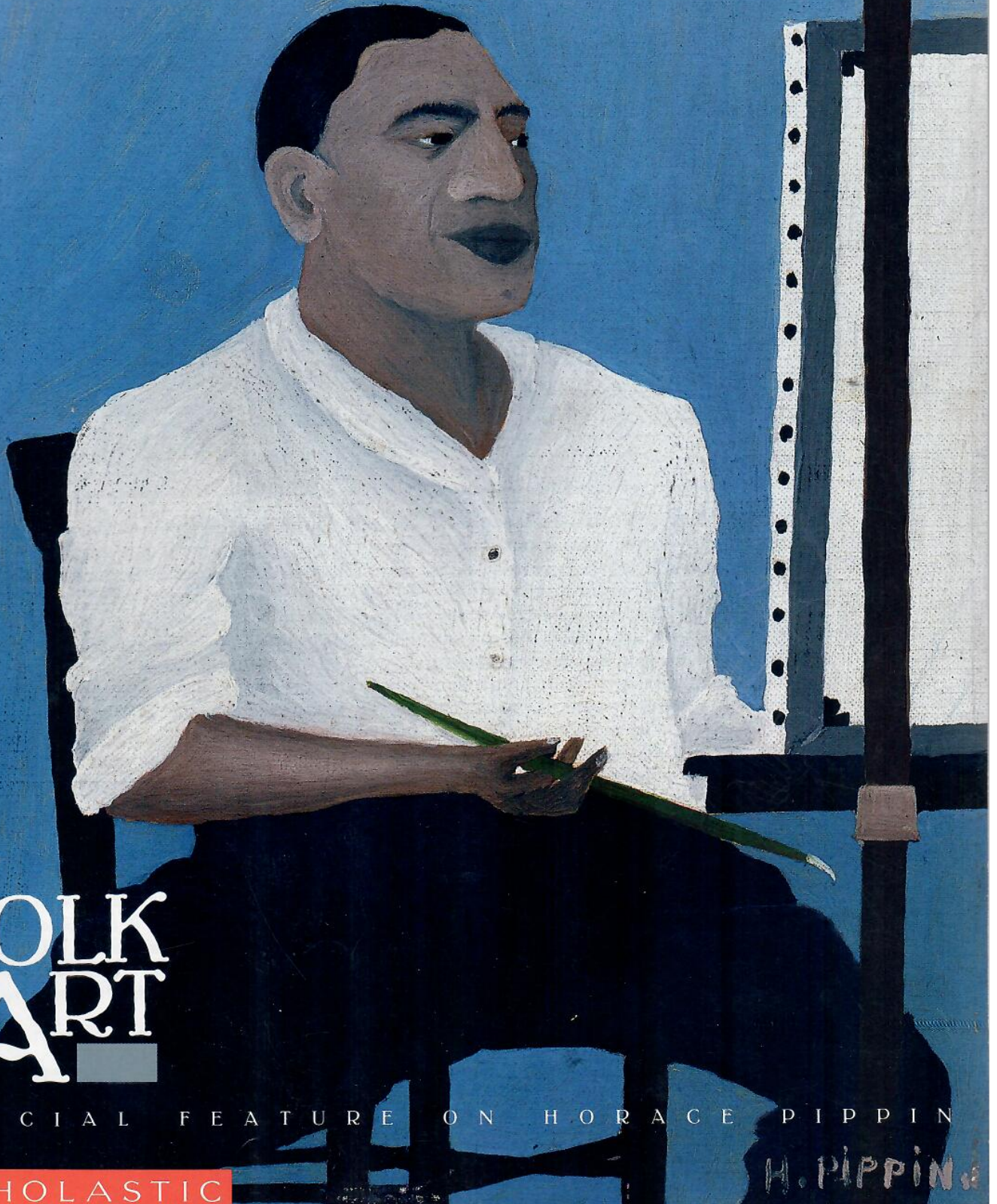


art & man

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FOLK ART

SPECIAL FEATURE ON HORACE PIPPIN

 SCHOLASTIC

H. PIPPIN

Some folk art — like this Navaho sand painting shown at the right — was created as part of a ceremonial function.

Many folk art designs — like this stylized flower (below), which was sewn into a quilt — had very practical uses.

Discover
an art
of everyday
life
created
by people
who never went
to art school.



DETAIL FROM A PIECED QUILT, PEONY, PENNSYLVANIA, C.1895. WHOLE QUILT: 90" X 75". PRIVATE COLLECTION.



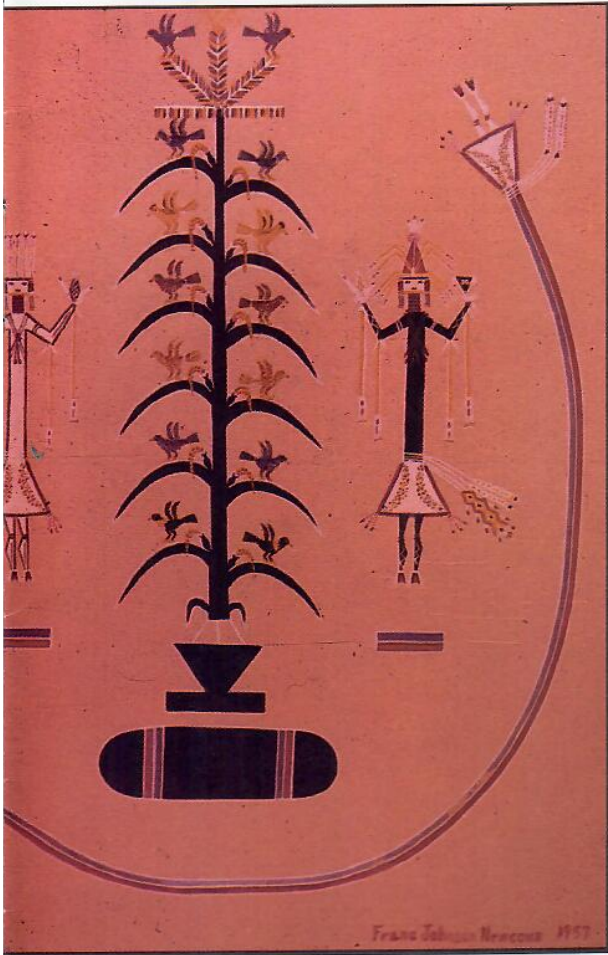
Why do ordinary people who are not professional artists make art? Take, for example, hardworking farm women of the 19th century who worked long hours, often from dawn to dusk. What made so many of them spend their few free hours making quilts? They would take scraps of worn-out clothing and piece them together to form complex, colorful patterns. Some women would spend years on a quilt. They might incorporate fabrics with special meanings — a piece of an old wedding dress, curtains from a first home, or exotic material from a faraway land. Designs like the one of a flower (above left) were passed on from one generation to the next, from one region to another. These quilts provided warmth at night but just as importantly, they gave the women who created them an escape from the drudgery of their everyday lives. Through the use of color, pattern, shapes, and texture, they could create personal expressions of feeling and spirit. As one Midwesterner said, "I would have lost my mind if I had not had my quilts to do!"

Quilting and many of the traditional American folk arts began in the late 18th century and grew during the 19th century because there were no machines to make furniture, clothing, dishes, blankets,
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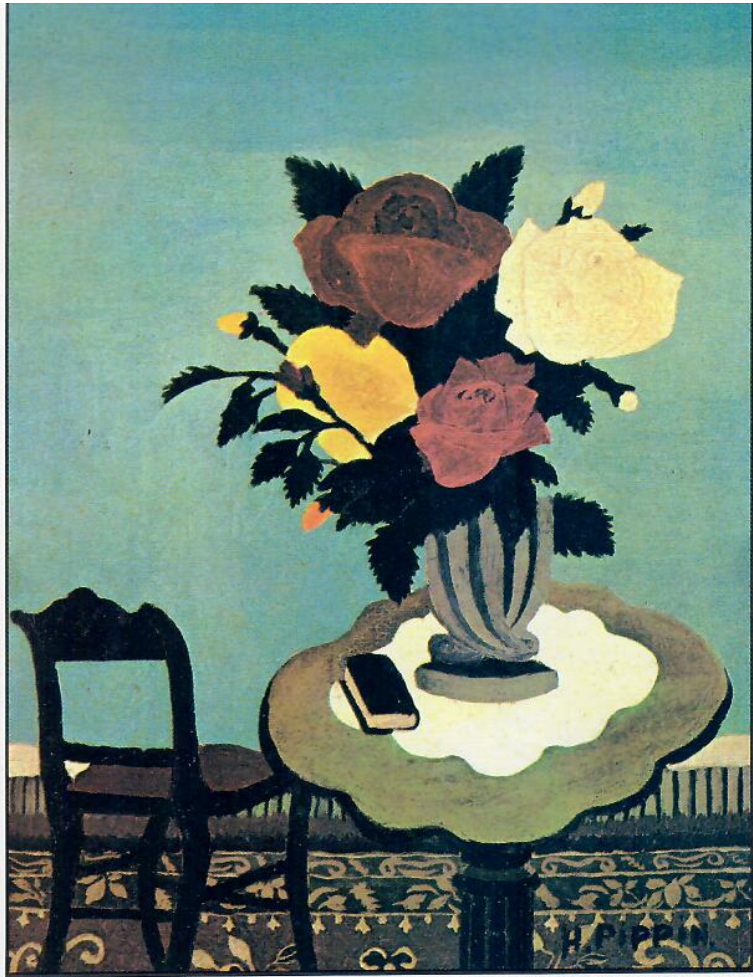
and other necessities. Everything had to be made by hand. Many settlers were skilled craftspersons, and they used their skills to make personal objects.

But does the term "folk art" make you think only of quilts, furniture, and other American crafts? If the answer is yes, you may be forgetting some important folk art that was being done in this country. For example, the elegant design (above center) was created by a Navaho sandpainter. Like the quiltmaker, this artist also used everyday materials — in this case, the sand under his feet. He also ground the colorful sandstones of the Southwest to get additional colors. He "drew" by letting the sands flow slowly through his fingers. Most of these drawings were so sacred they were destroyed after they were completed. (This is a copy.) These sandpaintings were used in special ceremonies to bring good luck or to help heal the sick. In this painting, the shape in the center is a corn plant — a powerful Navaho symbol of life and growth. The stylized figures on either side are supernatural beings. Like the flower in the quilt pattern,

THE FLOWERING



NAVAHO SAND PAINTING. (FACSIMILE). SMITHSONIAN NATIONAL ANTHROPOLOGICAL ARCHIVES.



HORACE PIPPIN (1888-1946). ROSES WITH RED CHAIR, 1940. OIL. 14" X 10". PRIVATE COLLECTION. PHOTO COURTESY JANET FLEISHER GALLERY, PHILADELPHIA. PHOTO BY NORINNE BETJEMAN

Folk artists did paintings in order to express themselves. The vase of flowers above was done by early 20th-century folk artist Horace Pippin to recapture a childhood memory.

the corn plant has been simplified to make a powerful, abstract symbol.

For early 20th-century folk painter Horace Pippin (see cover), plants were also powerful symbols. In the vase of flowers (above right), the bright blossoms seem to come toward us so we can better appreciate their beauty. Though not as *stylized* as the corn plant, the shapes are still simple and flat — reduced to their essence — flowers you might see in your mind, glowing and brilliant. Pippin had no art training, as we can tell from the flat perspective and the lack of realistic detail. But what he lacked in technical skills he made up for in feeling.

Pippin, who was born in Pennsylvania in 1888, didn't begin painting until he was in his 40's. Disabled by a war injury — a partially paralyzed right arm — it was a miracle he learned to paint at all. But it was also the war, World War I, that he would later say "brought out all the art in me." He enlisted in 1917 and was sent to France, where he kept a war diary of sketches. The next year, he was hit by a

sniper and was shipped home. He married, helped his wife deliver laundry, and for ten years his war experiences burned inside him waiting for some kind of visual outlet. Finally, after trying to strengthen his right arm, he came on a way to paint. Holding the brush in his injured right hand, he would use his left hand to push his right hand across the canvas. His first canvas was his summation of the war — it showed a war-torn landscape. It took him three years and over 100 coats of paint to finish.

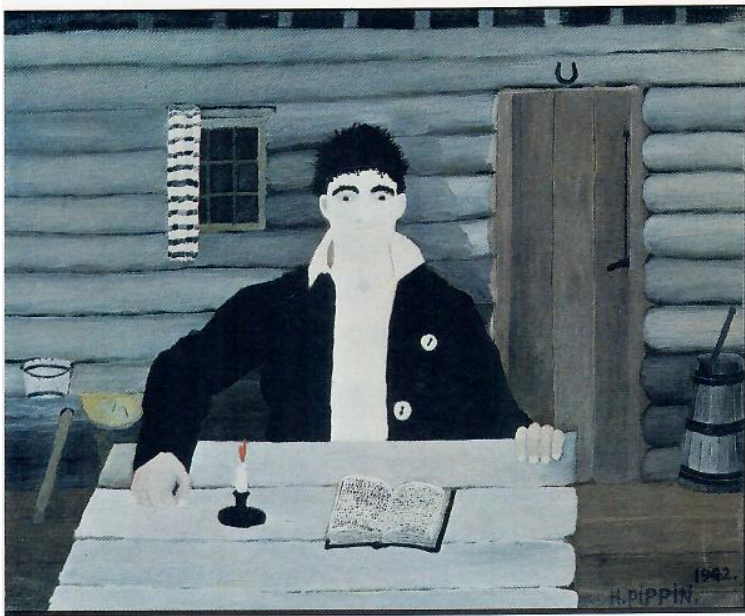
From war paintings, Pippin moved to other subjects that had great meaning for him — stories and scenes from his past (like the vase of flowers above), heroes of his childhood, portraits of family and friends. In 1937, his work was discovered in the window of a local shoemaker's shop by an art collector. Within a few years, his paintings were being shown in museums and galleries all over the country.

On the following pages, you'll find out more about Horace Pippin's strange and compelling work and what he struggled to express. You'll meet some con-

temporary artists who have established very successful careers in the folk art tradition and, finally, you'll use everyday materials and techniques to create an original work of your own.

G OF FOLK ART

These paintings
by Horace Pippin
all tell the story
of one man.
Who is he
and why
is he a hero?



The book in the painting above is the Bible, and Pippin has tilted the table to give us the best view of it. What does this tell us about the man reading it?

What is the story being told in these three paintings? Who is the man lying on a stretcher on the floor in one painting, reading his Bible in another, and being drawn in a wagon through a crowd? And why did this story mean so much to Horace Pippin that he would tell it over and over again in his work?

First, see what you can figure out from the paintings themselves. The time is clearly in the past. Can you tell that the man on the floor (in the painting, above center) is in a courtroom? There are 12 jurors in the background and the man on the right is a lawyer. But this is no ordinary courtroom scene. Pippin is telling a story of great drama and emotion. The “accused” has been injured so badly that he has been brought to the room on a stretcher. He looks up at us with painful, sad-looking eyes. There is blood under the bandage on his forehead.

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JOHN BROWN READING HIS BIBLE, 1942. OIL. PRIVATE COLLECTION

Above him, with the power to condemn him, sit 12 fierce-looking jurors, all with thick, bushy beards. Adding to the somber, tragic feeling are the dark colors. One of the few spots of bright color is the red of the prisoner’s blood. Pippin has carefully chosen details that give this story meaning. And he has simplified them to give them emotional significance.

Pippin has also composed the scene in a powerful, straightforward way. The jurors’ postures, the lawyer’s body, the lines in the floor provide an almost oppressive pattern of verticals. This makes the diagonal line of the lawyer’s accusing arm and the angled body of the prisoner stand out even more. The floor seems completely flat as if we were looking at it from

A H E R O

HORACE PIPPIN IN 1940. COURTESY OF ROBERT CARLEN GALLERIES, PHILADELPHIA.

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What makes the scene on the left so frightening?

Who is most important in the painting below? Why do we look at him first?



THE TRIAL OF JOHN BROWN, 1942. OIL. 16" X 20". COURTESY OF TERRY DINTENFASS GALLERY, N.Y.



JOHN BROWN GOING TO HIS HANGING, 1942. OIL. 24 1/8" X 30 1/4". THE PENNSYLVANIA ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS, PHILADELPHIA.

above. But this "error" in perspective pushes the figures forward and makes them more compelling.

The prisoner on trial is John Brown, who lived in the 1800's. His actions to help free slaves made him an outlaw in many parts of the country. In 1859, he and about 20 men raided the Federal Arsenal at Harper's Ferry, Virginia, but they were forced to surrender to a small force of U.S. Marines. Seriously wounded, Brown was brought to trial, convicted, and hanged. But his brave, moral statements at his trial made him famous. During the Civil War, Union troops would sing: "John Brown's body lies a' mouldering in the grave, but his soul goes marching on."

For Pippin, for black people of his time, John

Brown and Abraham Lincoln were powerful folk heroes. Pippin's mother, while still a slave, had witnessed Brown's hanging in 1859. She may be the angry woman in blue, her arms folded, her back turned on the mob, in the lower righthand corner of *John Brown Going to his Hanging* (above right). This painting, too, is mostly dark and light with bits of red and blue that draw us to faces or figures in the crowd. Brown's dark figure **stands out** clearly against the white of the prison. Details — the prison bars, the trees with their isolated leaves dangling from the branches, the three rigid black figures bearing him to his death — give this procession the feeling of a funeral march. Pippin did not have the technical

expertise to give us a perfectly detailed scene with natural shading and perspective. What he gave us were the **important details, simplified, stylized, and arranged** with great care and feeling.

S T O R Y

MASTERPIECE
OF THE MONTH
PREVIEW

How did Horace Pippin

bring old childhood

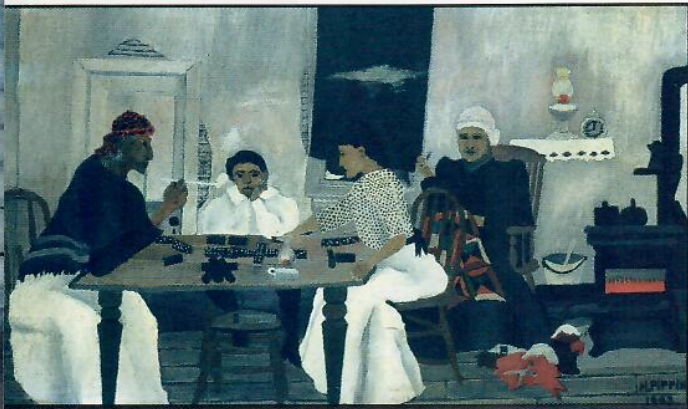
memories to life

in his painting

Domino Players?

Perhaps a typical night

in his studio was like this...



What gives this drab-looking room a warm feeling?



The year is 1943 and Horace Pippin is sitting in his studio, the dining room of a small frame house in West Chester, Pennsylvania. It is a dark room decorated with religious calendars and old photos of Pippin in his war uniform. It is night, the time he feels most inspired to paint, and he's working under a single bare light bulb. He's just started a new painting, *Domino Players* (above and on pages 8-9), a scene from his boyhood in Goshen, New York. For some time now, he has felt the need to look back, to capture again the look and feel of his childhood. As he works, there is little hesitation because the picture is already clear in his mind — which details he will include, how people will be sitting, the colors and patterns. But that doesn't mean he will finish it tonight. He may paint all through the night and into the next morning. And it will probably be several months before it is completed. Seeing this scene in his mind is one thing — getting it to look that way on canvas is another. Every detail has to be just right, and he will paint and repaint, building up layer upon layer of color.

Pippin takes a break. His left

arm is tired from all the energy it takes to push his deadened right arm across the canvas. Perhaps as he sits there, he thinks back on other memories of his childhood. Maybe he smiles to himself as he remembers all the times he got into trouble at school for doodling. Or perhaps he remembers the portrait he made of a farmer he once worked for at age 14. The farmer had fallen asleep while reading the newspaper. Pippin took the opportunity to sketch him and left the drawing on the table. The farmer was so pleased he wanted to send Pippin to art school. But Pippin's mother got sick and there was no time for school of any kind. At 15, he unloaded coal at a coal yard. Then he moved on to working in a feed store and after that, he was a porter in a hotel for seven years.

Pippin picks up his brush and goes back to work on *Domino Players*. In his mind, he can almost hear the sound of the dominoes clicking on the wooden table. Perhaps he thinks of himself as he paints the boy in

MEMORIES

What makes the room on the left seem both “proper” and exotic?

How do the vertical shapes and variety of patterns shown below echo the musical harmonies that are being produced by these figures?



VICTORIAN INTERIOR, 1946. OIL. 25 1/4" X 30". THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART, N.Y.



H. PIPPIN

the middle. His head rests on his hand. He looks a little bored. He is surrounded by adults, probably his mother, grandmother, and aunt. The room is in disrepair — the paint is peeling, the walls are cracking, the chairs are broken, the window shade droops — but it doesn't seem to matter. There is a red, crackling fire in the stove; one woman stitches a brightly colored quilt; a lamp burns brightly on the shelf; and everyone relaxes from a week of hard work.

In this painting, Pippin **balances** the grim poverty of his childhood with bits of **bright color** which suggest human warmth and feeling. He uses **areas of light and dark** to make each one of these figures stand out in a powerful way. The **round human figures** are grouped solemnly against the **geometric architecture** of the room — the **rectangles** of the window and door, the **linear pattern** of the floorboards, the **rigid structure** of table and chairs. The woman (second from the right, who is probably Pip-

pin's mother) reaches for a domino, the clocks tells us it is eight, and the game continues.

In another scene from his boyhood, *Harmonizing* (above right), four singers form a **unit** in the center of the painting, their **harmony emphasized** and **visually united** by the **vertical line** of the lamppost and the **pattern** of the fence in back. There is a timeless feeling to both of these moments from the past.

Victorian Interior (above center), which may be the parlor room of one of the people for whom his mother worked, also has a human presence. As Pippin said, "If you look carefully you'll see that She's left her knitting, and He's left his pipe. They'll be back any moment. . . ." The huge, colorful bouquet of tropical-looking flowers placed in the center of the painting dominates the room. It is so bright it seems part of the legs of the table which are almost like roots, growing into the green carpet. The **symmetry** (one side is like the other) of the painting creates an

eerie feeling. Everything sits frozen in position, but who knows what will happen a moment later? In all of these paintings, Horace Pippin shows us the magical, poetical pictures of his mind.

HARMONIZING, 1944. OIL. 24" X 30". ALLEN ART MUSEUM, OBERLIN COLLEGE, OBERLIN, OH.

IN PAINT

M A S T E R P I E C E O F T H E M O



DOMINO PLAYERS BY



“The pictures
come to me
in my mind,
and if it seems
like a worthwhile picture,

I paint it.

I go over the picture
several times in my mind,

and when

I am ready to paint it,

I have all the details

I need.”

—Horace Pippin

HORACE PIPPIN

CRAFT CAREERS

Meet two contemporary American artists
who create useful objects which are also works of art.



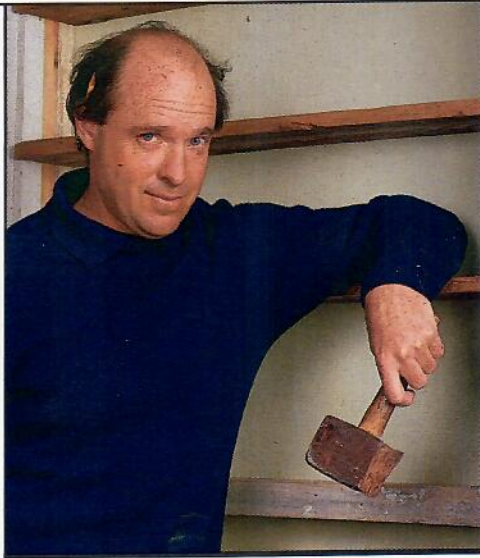
BARBARA GONZALEZ: UPDATING TRADITION

If you were to visit Barbara Gonzalez's studio in northern New Mexico, you would probably find the artist — dressed in jeans, jogging shoes, and a sweatshirt — creating at top speed to the sound of a TV in the background. Barbara Gonzalez makes pottery — some pieces (like the red clay pot above) are traditional, while others feature unusual new shapes and designs.

While the artist and her work are very contemporary, Barbara Gonzalez has a long tradition behind her. She is the great-granddaughter of Maria Martinez, the most famous of all Southwestern potters. Barbara was taught pottery-making as a child, but she learned to market her work herself. College educated, the artist has degrees in education and is a skilled businessperson. She sells her pieces through galleries she has chosen with great care.

Every piece Barbara Gonzalez creates is individual and handmade. To make a pot like the one above, the artist gathers clay in the nearby hills behind the Tewa Indian pueblo community where she lives. This jar may look simple but it is as carefully **composed** as any painting. Its **round shape contrasts** with the **pointed, geometric shapes** of the painted designs. The artist has set up a **positive/negative contrast** by painting in black **background areas (negative shapes)**, while the red areas become the **positive shapes**. The carefully placed, bright blue stones serve as **color accents**.

BARBARA GONZALEZ: RED CLAY POT WITH BLACK DESIGN. TURQUOISE INSETS. 43 3/4" HIGH. PHOTO COURTESY MARK NOHL/BARBARA GONZALEZ



STEPHEN WHITTLESEY: ECHOES OF THE PAST

Is the nine-foot-high cabinet on the right like any you've ever seen? Is it furniture, an ancient Egyptian mummy case, or a decaying old boat? Massachusetts artist Stephen Whittlesey calls this piece *Prairie Night*. It has shelves and a door, but like all the artist's furniture, it is haunting and mysterious.

Stephen Whittlesey was born in a small town south of Boston. He spent his summers on Cape Cod in a house his father had built from old scrap wood. The artist still lives on Cape Cod, but he went through years of training and inner struggle before he finally decided on a career. He earned a degree in English from Columbia University, wrote for a newspaper, then went back to school, studied sculpture, and worked as a carpenter specializing in restoring houses. In the abandoned buildings where he worked, he discovered wonderful old pieces of wood. He began making furniture out of them and enjoyed it so much he decided to create his unusual furniture full time, "whether anybody bought it or not." It didn't sell, and Whittlesey was becoming discouraged. Then one day he got a call from a New York gallery — one of the many to which he had sent photos of his furniture. The gallery began selling his pieces, and he can now support himself through his work.

The artist looks for used building materials "with former or hidden lives" — an old stable door, an abandoned porch, decaying stairs. Made out of an old lobster boat, *Prairie Night's* **rectan-**

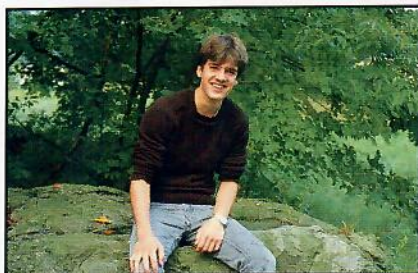


gular door contrasts with its **curved shape**. Its **rough texture** is filled with knotholes and "shadows of hinges and latches that are no longer there." The artist uses **color** in unusual ways. The cabinet's top is green and when the weathered door is opened, the yellow and peach shelves are revealed.

Whittlesey says, "In looking back, I'd say there is no way of planning on 'being an artist.' You search and gradually evolve. You have to learn to deal with isolation and rejection and, hopefully, to handle success. Being an artist is no place to run and hide — it's a rough but exciting way to live. For me it would have been far harder to march with the crowd."

STEPHEN WHITTLESEY (B. 1938), PRAIRIE NIGHT, 1986, YELLOW PINE
PHOTOS COURTESY STEPHEN WHITTLESEY

MARK ANDERS



DREAM JOURNEYS

A huge, exotic bird perches on a tree branch. A tiny man dressed in feathers aims his primitive weapon. What is happening? And where is this strange scene on the opposite page taking place? Is it set in the dark depths of some South American jungle? Or are we inside the imagination of the artist — 17-year-old Mark Anders of Cambridge, Massachusetts.

Mark was a junior when he created this scratchboard drawing at the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. Last fall, we talked to him about the “story” behind it. He is currently studying art at the Rhode Island School of Design, where he plans to major in fine arts or illustration. In his free time, Mark enjoys music and sports, especially neighborhood basketball games with friends.

How did you get interested in art?

I’ve always enjoyed art. But when I was younger, I was terrible. I couldn’t draw at all. My parents would give me wood-carving tools instead and I would hammer away. I didn’t start drawing or painting until five years ago. My mother was reading the book *Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain*. We started to do some of the exercises in the book. It showed us how to see, how to draw. Before that, I had had a lot of ideas but didn’t know how to put them on paper.

Then I took art in high school. I didn’t think I had to learn the basics before I started sloshing paint around. So I flunked. But I got good criticism, and I seemed to improve pretty quickly after that. I was determined then. The book had shown me that anyone could learn how to draw.

How did you go about doing this piece (right), *The Voyage of Mark Anders*?

We had an assignment to do a scratchboard project. So I got all my ideas down on a piece of regular paper, just the way I wanted it to look. Then I transferred everything to the scratchboard. With the scratchboard, I knew detail would be important, because every little line stands out.

Scratchboard also changes things around. You’re starting with dark and adding light. It gives a strange feeling, like a bright light glowing but you don’t know where it’s coming from. So maybe that’s why I tended toward something mysterious and dreamlike. But a lot of my stuff is a little strange. It’s realistic, but not completely.

What was the idea you originally had for the piece?

I wanted to do a bird. And I also

had an idea for a guy hiding in the grass. I was fooling around with a little piece of scratchboard, experimenting with it. And it came out as this eel-like grass. The scene came in bits and pieces; one thing led to another.

Where did the bird come from? Was it completely from your imagination?

Well, I didn’t know how to draw a bird, so I flipped through a bird book. I didn’t find what I wanted, but it did show me how to do bird feathers — the patterns, the layers and how they went together. But there was nothing in the book as exotic as that. I wanted it to be a beautiful bird, and also to give the feeling that it was too bad it was being shot.

How about other “characters” — the monkey, the man in the grass?

The man looks like he’s trapped



The more I look at my drawing, the more I can see a story there, though I never planned it out. It's not a serious or tragic story. . . . It's a moment. It's its own little world. It makes me think of the inside of the brain. All these creatures doing battle inside my head.

down there. It's such a ropy, dense jungle. It looks like it's impossible to get anywhere unless you're a monkey. The monkey was the last thing to be added. It was a little dull up there. It needed something. So I made him the observer, looking down at it all.

I wanted to get the effect of a flash picture in the jungle at night.

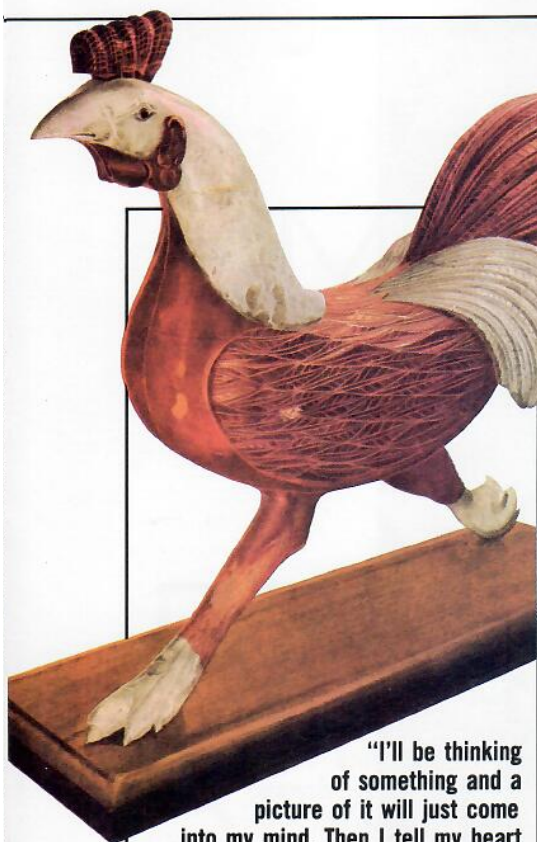
You can't see back very far. And there are a lot of unknown things out there.

The more I look at my drawing, the more I can see a story there, though I never planned it out. It's not a serious or tragic story. It gives me a nice feeling. It's a moment. It's its own little world. It makes me think of the inside of the

brain. All these creatures doing battle inside my head.

Would you like to see your own work featured on these pages? We select our Artist of the Month from students who have won medals in the Scholastic Art Awards Program. To enter, ask your teacher to write to the Scholastic Art Awards, 730 Broadway, New York, NY 10003 for entry deadline and rules book.

CREATING FOLK ANIMALS



"I'll be thinking of something and a picture of it will just come into my mind. Then I tell my heart and hand to go ahead." — Horace Pippin

CAROUSEL, ROOSTER, C. 1900. WOOD. NATIONAL GALLERY OF ART, WASHINGTON, D.C.

What kind of animal would you like to be?

The bird on the left was carved by an unknown 19th-century American folk artist. Like a great deal of folk art, this rooster was created for a specific purpose. It was to be used on a carousel for children to ride on. You've probably seen many other representations of animals — in ads, cartoons, and logos. Why is this one in a museum? What makes it a work of art?

As we've seen, folk artists had no formal artistic training. But what the best folk artists, like Horace Pippin, lacked in technical ability they made up for in originality, intensity, and an ability to capture the *essence* of their subject. Does this rooster look at all

realistic? What qualities does it have? The artist emphasized the bird's *arrogance* and *pride* but also (since it was meant for a carousel) added *speed*. Your eye moves with the **rhythmic flow** of the body, from the pointed beak to the sweep of the tail. The white areas **balance** the red ones; the **smooth** parts **contrast** with the **textured patterns** of the wings and tail. The **curved shapes** of the body **emphasize** the **active, diagonal lines** of the legs. The tail and comb are **exaggerated** to emphasize the bird's pride.

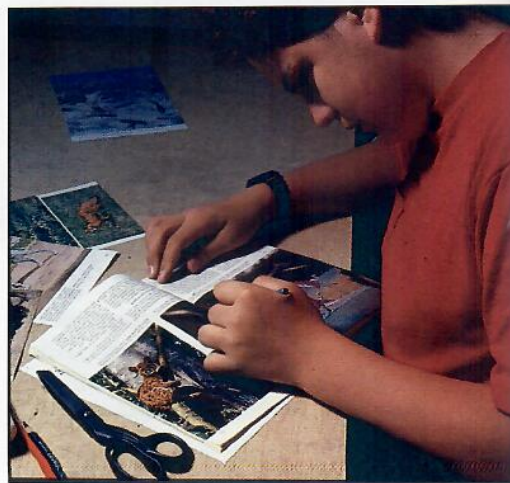
In this workshop, you'll use "folk art" materials to create an animal that visually expresses certain characteristic qualities.

MATERIALS

- Brown kraft paper: various sizes
- Prismacolor pencils
- *National Geographic* and other nature magazines
- X-Acto knives or scissors
- Elmer's Glue-All
- Scraps of fabric; old clothes
- Ebony pencil
- Vinyl Eraser

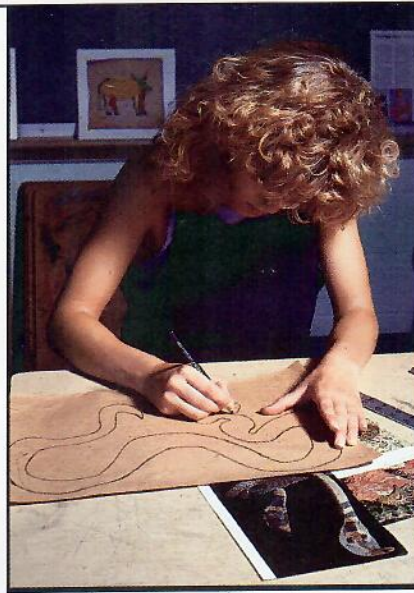
STARTING OUT

1 Select and tear out full-page photos of animals. Choose several that have the most possibilities for development. De-



cide which qualities should be stressed — skin/fur, teeth, eyes, tail, horns, coloring — usually what you noticed first.

2 Draw a simple silhouette. Stylize features to express animal's character. Emphasize parts, exaggerate (without too much distortion), flatten shapes, elongate. Use colored pencils and incorporate fabrics when appropriate.



SOME SOLUTIONS

What animal and quality has each artist chosen to express? Which one used jagged shapes, dynamic diagonals, and bright, contrasting colors to suggest speed and movement? How

has a simple shape, a few thin lines, and a repetitive, geometric texture depicted a calm, elegant animal? Two artists have chosen the same animal. One has used sharp, pointed shapes, cross-hatching, and background details to show an angry, savage creature, while the other has used central placement, a colorful fabric pattern, and a curved horizon line with shadow to depict a similar animal as playful and friendly. And which animal is so stylized that its curved shape with its geometric, diamond-shaped pattern has become an instantly recognizable symbol of danger?



ARTS ALIVE

A permanent museum and a traveling exhibit offer some of the best in American folk arts and crafts.

A FANTASY ANIMAL

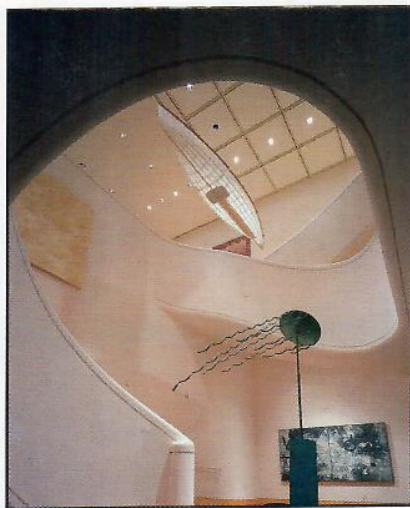
During the late 19th century, large, ornate carousels became fixtures of the new public parks that were being built in American cities. This high-stepping horse (right) is from a carousel produced by the Gustav Dentzel Company in Philadelphia around 1902. Daniel Muller, the master carver who completed this horse, gave special attention to its "romance" side, which faced outward and was designed to entice riders. Notice the horse's wavy mane, head cocked at a jaunty angle, and the elaborate saddle decorations. Compare this horse with the rooster on page 14. How does each figure **characterize** the animal? How have the artists **stylized** each figure? What features are **exaggerated** or **simplified**?



This horse is part of an exhibit featuring more than 90 examples of American folk art from the Shelburne Museum in Vermont. The exhibit will travel from the Denver Museum to the Los Angeles County Museum; the Wadsworth Atheneum, Hartford; New York Historical Society; and the Worcester Art Museum. The tour will end in August 1990.

A PERMANENT HOME FOR AMERICAN CRAFTS

Modern examples of crafts often give traditional items a new form. In the photo (right) we see a futuristic weather vane, a fiberglass canoe, and a contemporary quilt. The setting is the American Craft Museum in New York City which opened in 1986 to provide a permanent space for showing a variety of craft items. Designed by architect Bruce S. Fowle, the museum provides a subtle, neutral



background for the items to be exhibited. Notice how the works on display contrast with the clean design, elegant curves, and light-colored walls of the building.

What is the difference between crafts and fine arts? Craft items are not only a vehicle for self-expression, they have a practical use as well. Quilts, pottery, clothing, and jewelry are some examples. Also, craft items often can be made by artists with little formal training, using simple, inexpensive, and readily available materials. — S. B.

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