



**An International Heritage:
Ethnic Folk Arts in Upstate New York**

June 26 - August 1, 1993
Castellani Art Museum of Niagara University



This is an official event of the International Cultural Festival, World University Games Buffalo'93 -
a celebration of people and cultures - where artists and athletes of the world come together.

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Special thanks to Ed Patton, Director of the Western New York Heritage Institute of Canisius College, and to Bill Siener, Director of the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, for preparing exhibition hand-outs on the history of ethnic immigration in Upstate New York. We are grateful to Shan Jia, Staff Folklorist at Arts for Greater Rochester; Jolene Rickard; Penny Hudson; and Jadwiga Regina for their artist recommendations.

The Castellani Art Museum's Folk Arts Program is made possible through generous support from the New York State Council on the Arts and the National Endowment for the Arts. A portion of the museum's general operating funds for this fiscal year have been provided through the Institute of Museum Services, a Federal agency that offers general operating support to the nation's museums.

Artists and Traditions

Penny Hudson, Marylou and Marlene Printup, **Native American Beadwork**

Jay Clause, **Native American Bone Carving**

Vernell Addison, **African-American Quilting**

Fayre Baldino, **Norwegian Rosemaling**

Margaret Harold, **Irish Embroidery**

Aharon Baruch, **Jewish Papercutting**

Raymond Colaruotolo, **Italian Stonecarving**

Michelina Velardi, **Italian St. Joseph's Bread**

Stanley Kuras, **Polish Wickerwork**

Henia Makowski, **Polish Weaving and Netting**

Anastasia Smereczynska and Mirosława Pryjmak, **Ukrainian Embroidery**

Gail Skucas, **Lithuanian Weaving**

Elizabeth Miller, **Amish Quilting**

Cesar Romero, **Puerto Rican Carnival Masks**

Ramon M. Estrada-Vega, **Puerto Rican Santos**

Zhuqing Fucha, **Chinese Brush Painting**

Yoshiko Tanigaki, **Japanese Origami**

Ganga Pansari, **East Indian Mehendi**

Manychanh Khonsavanh, **Laotian Weaving**

Our research and documentation of folk art and artists in Western New York is ongoing. Please call or visit the museum, or use the comment board included in the exhibition, to share information about folk traditions in your communities.

Beating the Odds: Ethnic Folk Arts in the Age of MTV

When considering the long-term prospects for folk art's survival, scholars generally fall somewhere between two intellectual camps. At one end of the debate, those who subscribe to a sort of Darwinian "survival of the fittest" philosophy insist that cultural change is inevitable. Attempts to intervene on behalf of fading or "endangered" traditions are perceived as a misguided interference in the natural evolution of culture. From this point of view, it's okay if we find that the musical traditions of the indigenous peoples of the rain forest are rapidly being replaced by rock 'n' roll. If traditions die out, this simply means that they are no longer of any interest to the people who created them.

Scholars with conservationist sympathies, on the other hand, reject the idea that cultural change is a harmless or neutral process, and work to preserve traditions. Recognition of the value of "the old ways" - mixed with large doses of romanticism and nostalgia - began to grow among academic circles as the Industrial Revolution gained momentum during the mid-19th century. Though appreciative of the ways of the past, these scholars rarely intervened directly on their behalf, and were hardly optimistic about the odds for the survival of cultural traditions. Early folklorists, for example, engaged in what they felt was a race against time to document and catalog folk traditions so that future generations would at least be able to read about folklore in books.

Contemporary conservationist scholars acknowledge the fact that folk art's persistence in the 20th century indicates an impressive ability to respond and adapt to cultural change. They warn, however, that the world is now facing an unprecedented period of rapid change brought about by global communications, travel, and marketing strategies. In a special winter 1990 issue of the Northeast Indian Quarterly, John Suter asserts:

All over the globe now cultures are endangered or dying as a result of the intensity and rapidity of change. The normal process of cultural evolution involves the gradual integration of new elements into a tradition (so) that continuity of essential values and forms are maintained. Although it is difficult to prove, I would contend that when change happens too quickly, individuals and the community as a whole cannot integrate the new elements into the tradition. Links with the past are broken, and if the drive toward assimilation is involved, as it often is in American immigrant communities, the ways of the past are discarded as old fashioned and dysfunctional in the modern world. Some of them are dysfunctional - sexism and old ethnic prejudices and rivalries come to mind - but others are vital to the community's sense of identity...

Scholars may both predict and document the ways in which cultural change affects tradition, but folk artists deal with change head-on. It is the folk artist who must decide how group identity and personal creativity, old and new materials, traditional ways of doing things and new technologies will be combined in his work.



Manychanh Khonsavanh, Laotian Weaver

Photo: Marilyn Anderson, Impact Visuals

Folk art means many things to many people. Among the artists included in "An International Heritage", there are a few who think of what they do as a hobby. Others see their work as a way to make a living. Most of these artists, however, are devoted to making artwork that they believe both expresses and preserves their particular cultural heritage. In this exhibit, artist statements and biographies are included with artwork to reveal the many challenges faced in creating ethnic folk art. From the perspective of these community-based artists, we find that "change" is not always as benign as it may seem to outsiders. Several artists have been the victims of political persecution that included the repression of their folk traditions. Others point to changes in technology that threaten the survival of their traditional arts. Tuscarora beadworker, Penny Hudson, worries that cheap machine-made beadwork exported into the United States by foreign manufacturers during the past few years may eventually destroy the demand for more costly handmade Native American items.

The experiences of recent Laotian immigrant Manychanh Khonsavanh give the fullest picture of the kinds of problems that have been shared by generations of ethnic folk artists in the United States. Manychanh has been an accomplished weaver of finely patterned silk since she was a young woman. The profits from her work were a main source of income for her family in Laos, and helped them survive life in a displaced persons camp in Thailand. While in Thailand, the family dreamed of coming to America where they were sure Manychanh's skills would help them to secure "the good life". After resettling in Rochester, New York, they were shocked to find how high the cost of living is in the United States. The kind of thread Manychanh needed for her weaving was very expensive and hard to find. Soon, the family realized that Manychanh would never be able to sell enough weavings at high enough prices to cover the cost of her materials and labor, much less supply the family with a good income. The family sought out whatever work was available at minimum wage. Manychanh continues to weave Laotian style skirts and scarves for friends and family members, but finds that it's getting harder to fit weaving into the fast pace of American life. There are several other Laotian women in the Rochester community who know how to weave, but Manychanh is the only one who has not discarded her loom.

Through this exhibition, one of many projects coordinated by the Castellani Art Museum's Folk Arts Program, we continue our partnership with folk artists and communities committed to preserving their traditional arts. Survey exhibitions of any kind inevitably leave out much more than they include. We apologize to the members of the many ethnic communities who are not represented here. Our research and documentation of folk art and artists in Western New York is ongoing. Please call or visit the museum, or use the comment board included in the exhibition, to share information about folk traditions in your communities. We look forward to meeting and working with you!

Kate Koperski
Curator of Folk Arts

What is the greatest challenge you face in keeping your traditions alive?

We need to teach the children of today respect for the beauty of Mother Earth...to keep them from being caught up in the fast lane. Traditional people are sensitive to Mother Earth. Fast lane people overlook the beauty all around them.

Jay Clause, Native American Bone Carving

It's very difficult to make a living at traditional work. I couldn't do that in the United States.

Stanley Kuras, Polish Wickerwork

I try to go backward in my craft as well as forward. It's important for me to keep learning more about the history of stonecarving while keeping abreast of the latest trends in the sculpture field. In my work, I keep in tune with what the general public is looking for, but I never lose sight of my traditional values.

Raymond Colaruotolo, Italian Stonecarving

You need a lot of patience to keep traditions alive. Unfortunately, our modern lifestyle does not value patience.

Yoshiko Tanigaki, Japanese Origami

To educate young people because otherwise these traditions will die...and young people are interested.

Henia Makowski, Polish Weaving



Raymond Colaruotolo, Italian Stone Carver

Photo: Marilyn Anderson, Impact Visuals

What is the greatest change that has occurred in the art you make during your lifetime?

The new step-dance dresses are all machine-embroidered. The embroidery made with this industrial process is not nearly as good a quality as handmade. It goes against tradition...and takes the worth right out of the embroidery work.

Margaret Harold, Irish Embroidery

There are no changes in Ukrainian embroidery. If there are changes, it's not Ukrainian embroidery anymore. It's something else.

Mirosława Pryjmak, Ukrainian Embroidery

There are just so many different types of beads available today. There are so many new colors. There are even new shapes like tiny butterflies. It gives you a lot more choices when you're making something.

Penny Hudson, Native American Beadwork

When they were able to purchase a quilt in the store without spending a great deal of time and effort making one themselves, people just dropped quilting.

Vernell Addison, African-American Quilting

Santos have been given the recognition they deserve as an art form that reflects the unique cultural traditions of Puerto Ricans.

Ramon M. Estrada-Vega, Puerto Rican Santos

When I first came to the United States, it was difficult to teach embroidery or any other Ukrainian traditions. My students were ashamed. I once sat down on a bus next to a student, and he moved away. He was afraid I would speak to him in Ukrainian. It's easier to teach our traditions now that my students are proud to be Ukrainian.

Anastasia Smereczynska, Ukrainian Embroidery



Stanley Kuras Making Bassinet For His Firstborn, 1953



Penny Hudson, Marylou and Marlene Printup, Native American Beadwork. When Penny Hudson was asked to exhibit her beadwork as part of "An International Heritage," she suggested that the work of her sister and sister-in-law also be included. "You really can't get much of an idea of what our beadwork is like by looking at one person's work. There's such a variety in beadwork. We all have our own styles and our own way of doing things."

A member of the Turtle Clan of the Tuscarora Nation, Penny grew up on the Tuscarora Reservation just outside Niagara Falls, New York. Her mother, Doris Pembleton Printup Hudson, and grandmother, Harriet Jones Pembleton, were beadworkers. "They both did really beautiful work. But the sad part of it is, they never really thought of themselves as artists. Beadwork was something they did to survive. I didn't think about it as artwork either until a few years ago when I was invited to the Cleveland Museum."

Penny and her sister Marylou began to learn how to "sew", or do beadwork, when they were children. "My mother didn't really have the patience to explain a lot of things to us kids. We learned by sitting and watching her as she worked." Marlene Printup took beadworking classes with Penny's mother after marrying into the family.

As children, Penny and Marylou were both expected to bring their own beadwork to sell at the New York State Fair each year. "I started doing sewing when I was four," remembers Penny, "and I was only seven when I did my first medallion. We were taught very early that if we could do beadwork, we'd never starve. We'd have the money we needed to buy things and to do the things we wanted."

As an adult, Penny explains, "I'm not really into beadwork for the money. I find beadwork very relaxing. I can always tell what kind of mood I was in when I was working on a piece

by its color scheme. Does it have calm, quiet colors or bright lively ones?" Penny also makes special beadwork pieces for family events like births and weddings. "Beadwork has always been a tradition for us and it should stay in the family."

For the past 11 years, Penny has given classes in beadwork at the school on the Tuscarora Reservation. "It's important to get our young kids interested in keeping our traditions going," she says. The beadwork tradition has deep roots in the Niagara Falls region. The Iroquois had been adorning their clothing with beads made from clay, shell, bone, teeth, and stone for generations before the introduction of glass beads by European traders in the 1600s. Distinctive beadwork patterns were inspired by Iroquois mythology and the beauty of the natural world.

While continuing to create beadwork for their own use, the Iroquois began making beadwork items for the tourist trade in the 18th century. Historical records suggest that the Tuscarora, adopted into the Iroquois Confederacy in 1722 or 1723, have been selling beadwork to tourists in the Niagara Falls area since at least the 1850s. In Native American communities, beadwork has mainly been used to decorate items of clothing including collars, shirts, leggings, skirts, moccasins, and hats. The tourist trade inspired the invention of a new type of beadwork named "whimsies." Pin cushions, picture frames, handbags, hanging birds, cases for needles and eyeglasses, and bookcovers became popular tourist items.

To this day, the Tuscarora decorate clothing and a variety of household items for both personal use and for sale. Several different beading techniques are used. Flat and raised beadwork designs are sewn onto a supporting fabric. Beadwork on fabric may also be done on a loom by simultaneously interweaving the beads and threads. Beads strung on wire are used to make small objects like rings and barrettes. "The quality of your work is the most important thing no matter what you're making," says Penny. "We're having a terrible problem right now with foreign manufacturers stealing our patterns and trying to do beadwork on machines. It looks okay when people see it at fairs and craft shows, but then you take it home and it falls apart. I'm not a mass-producer. I wouldn't want to buy anything that will fall apart, so I won't sew anything that will fall apart. Our family has always been into making things that they could be proud of."



Harriet Jones Pembleton, With Corn Husk Dolls, c. 1935



Fayre Baldino, Norwegian Rosemaling.

Rosemaling is a decorative painting technique, developed in Norway, in which flowing designs based on floral and leaf patterns are applied to walls, furniture and household items.

Mrs. Baldino began to do rosemaling in 1981. An aunt, who is a rosemaler, noticed some Christmas ornaments that Mrs. Baldino had painted for a hospital sale and told her, "If you can paint these, you can do rosemaling, and that's your heritage." Since then, Mrs. Baldino has taken many workshops with master rosemalers sponsored by the Sons of Norway Lodge in Pennsylvania. She has continually learned more about rosemaling because she enjoys "the challenge of doing it better all the time."

Mrs. Baldino works in three distinct regional styles including Rogaland, which she describes as "very symmetrical and balanced in both color and design"; Telemark, "which always begins with 'C' shaped strokes"; and Hallingdal, a style "that is not as deeply shaded as the others." Her home is filled with samples of her handiwork, applied to wooden plates, chests, and boxes. One of her most treasured pieces is a cradle decorated in the Rogaland style for her first grandchild.



Margaret Harold, Irish Embroidery.

Margaret Harold grew up in Northern Ireland surrounded by family and neighbors who were always sewing, embroidering, knitting and crocheting. After settling in the United States, Mrs. Harold combined her various needlework skills to make Irish step-dance costumes for her daughters. Soon, she was being asked to make costumes for their classmates.

Two types of costume are in current use. The designs for both come from the illuminated letters of the Book of Kells manuscript (8th or 9th century). Beginning dancers wear identical "class costumes" of green gabardine with chain stitch embroidery. A dancer who reaches

a certain degree of proficiency earns the privilege of choosing her solo costume. "The gaudier, the better," smiles Mrs. Harold displaying the fluorescent satins sent from Ireland. She keeps up on the latest trends in step-dance costumes with periodic telephone calls to her sister in Ireland.

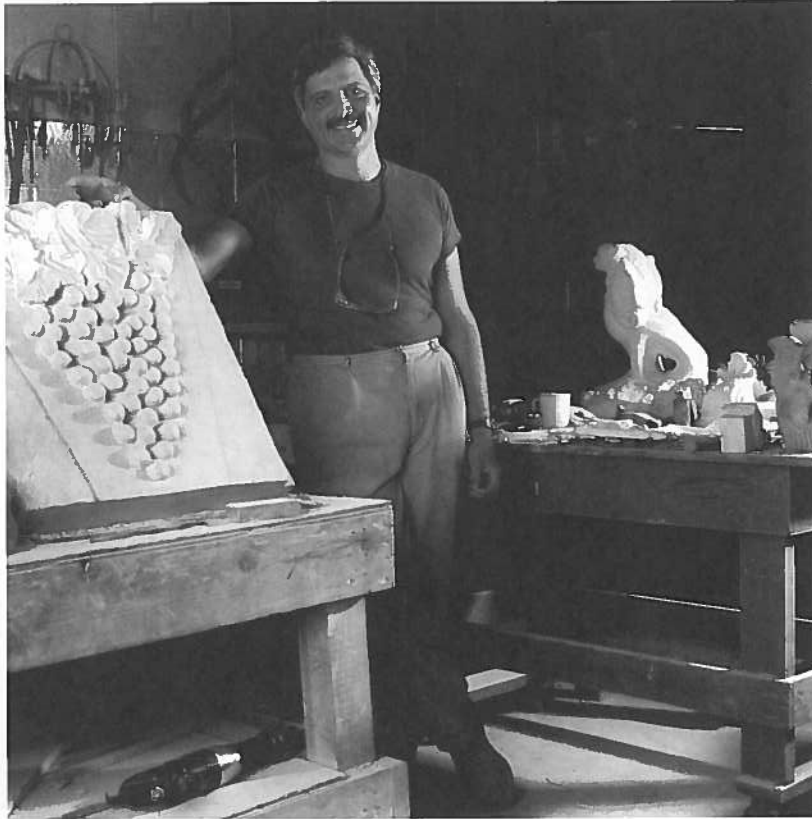
Making each solo costume is a unique, creative experience for Mrs. Harold. The neatness, precision and grace required of the dancers in performance is reflected in each dress she makes for them. Her "labor of love" brings a deep sense of satisfaction and accomplishment. "I get a high from doing this," she exclaims, "I do!"



Aharon Baruch, Jewish Papercutting. The decorative art of cutting designs into bark, parchment, fabric, and paper has existed for thousands of years. The earliest cuttings with Hebrew letters and Jewish symbols were created in Holland and Italy, from paper and parchment, in the 17th century. Early Jewish papercuts developed mainly as a religious art used to mark holiday celebrations and rites of passage.

As paper became more widely available in the 19th century, papercutting became a popular folk art throughout the Jewish communities of North Africa and Europe. In Eastern Europe, papercutting techniques were used to make Mizrahim, decorative wall hangings placed on the eastern wall of a home facing Jerusalem; birthing amulets; and elaborate marriage contracts called Ketubah. European papercut artists brought their talents to the United States in the 19th century. Many traditional Jewish papercuts from that era include American symbols. Jewish papercutting has re-emerged as a decorative folk art in the last thirty years.

Aharon Baruch, born in Jerusalem in 1959, has worked in many art media, from graphics and painting to metalwork, but most enjoys papercutting and Hebrew calligraphy. "This is not just part of my heritage, but a part of my religion and the way I practice my life," says Mr. Baruch. "Making something with religious input - it's not just a piece of art - it means a lot to me as a religious person."



Raymond Colaruotolo, Italian Stonecarving. When he was twelve years old, Raymond Colaruotolo began working with his father, a mason who immigrated from Gaeta, Italy in 1947. For fifteen years the men did what Mr. Colaruotolo describes as "general construction work," including the cutting and building of decorative stone fireplaces and archways. "Even as a boy," he says, "I was immediately attracted to stonework."

In his late twenties, Mr. Colaruotolo began to practice carving small scraps of stone. His first piece was a marble hand holding a heart. In 1983, Mr. Colaruotolo traveled to Rutland, Vermont to meet master carvers Dino and Derno Ambrosini. Now in their eighties, the brothers had worked on many carving projects for buildings in Washington, D.C. during the 1930s. Mr. Colaruotolo spent several weeks during each of the next eight years, "as much time as I could," working side by side with the older men. In 1988, he started his own stonecarving business in Rochester, New York. "Working with the Ambrosinis was like becoming part of a brotherhood," he says. The older men will soon retire and have promised their tools, many more than fifty or sixty years old, to Mr. Colaruotolo.

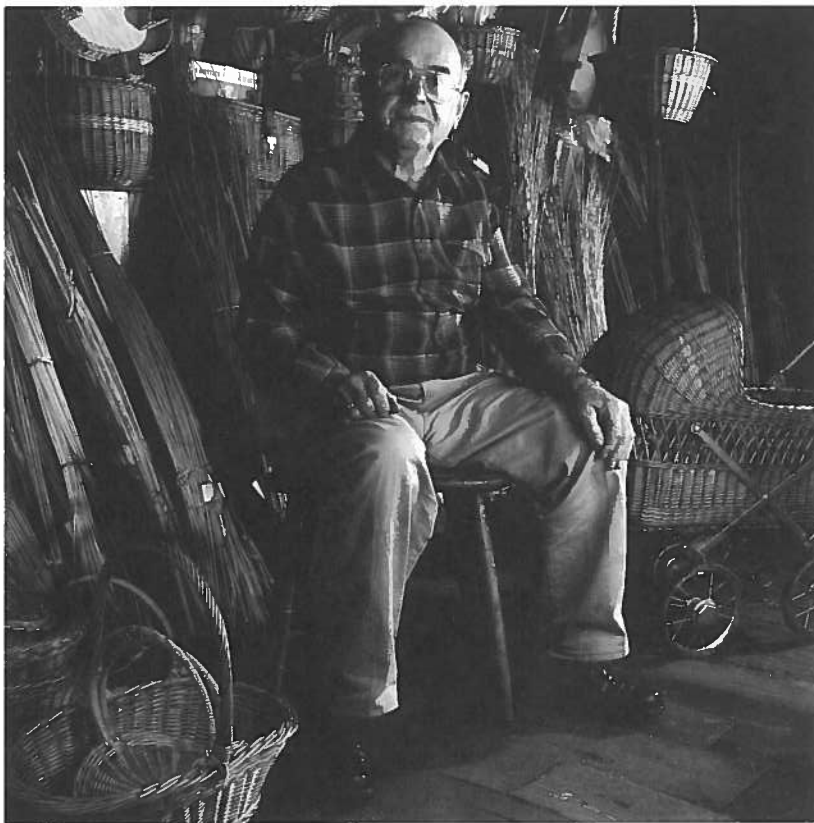


Michelina Velardi, Italian St. Joseph's Bread. The custom of preparing sculpted breads for St. Joseph's feastday on March 19 has its origins in 16th century Sicily. The breads are still part of a special meal, sometimes called a St. Joseph's table, hosted in the saint's honor by families, churches, clubs, and restaurants in Italian-American communities throughout the United States. Many St. Joseph's tables are offered in thanks for favors granted by the saint during the previous year. St. Joseph's breads are often fashioned into shapes representing his beard, staff, and halo.

Michelina Velardi was born in the town of Caltavuturo in the province of Palermo, Sicily. She emigrated to the United States 25 years ago and settled in Buffalo, New York.

Mrs. Velardi helped prepare St. Joseph's tables in her hometown in Sicily. As a young woman, she began to experiment with making St. Joseph's bread in a number of shapes: a lily (the traditional symbol of St. Joseph), "the Mazza Della Madonna" (a club held in the right hand of the Madonna of Caltavuturo), an artichoke, wheat, and asparagus. She is proud of the fact that each year the shapes come out the same; they are so exact that people often ask if she uses a mold to make them.

Although the tradition of making decorative breads for special occasions is very old, Mrs. Velardi personally feels that, "These breads are mine. No matter where you go, no one else makes bread like I do. I love doing it. St. Joseph gives me the ideas and the energy. I do it for St. Joseph."



Stanley Kuras, Polish Wickerwork.

Wicker basket making began to develop as an important cottage industry in Germany during the 18th century and soon spread to neighboring regions in Poland. According to Stanley Kuras, "everyone made baskets" in the Rzeszow region of southeastern Poland where he was born several years before the outbreak of the second World War.

A cousin and neighbor began to teach Mr. Kuras basket making when he was just ten years old. By age twelve, he was making his living at the craft. Most of the thousands of baskets Mr. Kuras made as a boy were shipped to distributors for export. Those sold locally were used mainly on farms to store and transport produce.

In 1942, Mr. Kuras was deported to Austria as a forced farm laborer. He later served with the Polish Army before settling in Rochester, New York in 1951. Mr. Kuras worked briefly for a basket factory in Rochester but moved on to employment with Eastman Kodak after he realized that "there was no future in basket making here."

Since moving to the United States, basket making has become an important way for Mr. Kuras to express his creativity and to share his Polish heritage with others. His most meaningful work is woven into the fabric of his family life: a bassinet for his firstborn child; his wife's sewing basket still "like new" even though the kids jumped on it everytime she mended; the flower-filled baskets his daughters carried as brides; a doll buggy for a lucky grandchild.



Henia Makowski, Polish Weaving. Henia Makowski grew up in northeastern Poland during World War II. Working alongside her mother, she learned all the skills required to make cloth for her family's needs. "We learned these things from a very young age. I learned this not as art... but as a necessity for living. We had to be very self-sufficient. If somebody didn't know how to do these things, they would be in big trouble."

At the time of Mrs. Makowski's girlhood in Poland, it was customary for a mother to provide her daughter with the items needed to set up housekeeping after marriage. Shortly after the war ended, Mrs. Makowski's mother raised and sheared the sheep, then spun and dyed the wool needed to make her daughter two intricate, double-woven bed coverlets. The coverlets, brought to the United States when Mrs. Makowski immigrated in the early 1960s, remain a powerful reminder of her mother. "The things my mother knew kept us alive in Poland. We couldn't have survived without her skills."



Mrs. Makowski no longer spins out of necessity, but because "This is a part of me." Now that she is retired, Mrs. Makowski plans to spend more time weaving with both wool and linen. A few years ago, she made a complete set of miniature tools, like those her mother used, to help show people in the United States how flax was prepared for spinning in Poland. "I find more value in this than before. Now this is something you don't have to do... and this piece of history is dying."

Anastasia Smereczynska and Mirosława Pryjmak, Ukrainian Embroidery.

Sisters Anastasia Smereczynska and Mirosława Pryjmak grew up in western Ukraine. During World War II, they fled Ukraine between the German withdrawal and the Russian advance. They spent the next 50 years in Rochester, New York, working to instill a knowledge of, and love for, Ukrainian customs and traditions in their community.

Through their activities in their parish, the Ukrainian Women's League, and the school where Miss Smereczynska taught, they became deeply involved in teaching embroidery. They had learned the traditional designs of western Ukraine at home and at school. Miss Smereczynska has the apron she made, when she was five years old, as a sampler of stitches. At the time "I only wanted to go outside and play," she recalls. Later, they researched traditional embroidery designs from all over Ukraine. These designs are incorporated in altar linens made by parish women for St. Josephat's Church in Rochester.

Today, children of the women they taught bring their own work to show the sisters. The two do less embroidery themselves, but continue as a strong force in their community. Summarizing the loves and loyalties of their lives, Miss Smereczynska explains: "We are in America, but we are Ukrainian."



Gail Skucas, Lithuanian Weaving. Although industrialization spread across Lithuania at the turn of the century, many women, particularly in rural regions, continued to weave cloth by hand up to the time of the second World War. Young women were taught to spin linen and wool, and to weave cloth needed to make clothing, bedding, towels, tablecloths, and other household items. While most Lithuanian women no longer undertake large-

scale weavings, many still make traditional sashes or juosta. Gail Skucas explains that the sashes "are used, up until this day, in almost every way imaginable. They are a part of Lithuanian christening and wedding ceremonies... we even do dances with sashes at weddings. They are worn as belts with dance costumes. Some men wear them as ties. Small sashes make good bookmarks, and larger ones can be sewn together to make tablecloths or placemats. Sashes are a traditional gift of welcome. In fact, when I was in Lithuania last summer, I received three sashes as gifts for my fiftieth birthday."

Mrs. Skucas' parents arrived in the United States with their family in 1949. "Because our relatives and friends in Lithuania were not allowed to practice their traditions, my parents felt it was very important for us to preserve our culture here," Mrs. Skucas explains. As a child, Mrs. Skucas spoke only Lithuanian at home, was an active folk dancer, and took part in many cultural activities as a member of the Lithuanian Girl Scouts.

Mrs. Skucas learned to weave Lithuanian sashes in 1986 after moving to Rochester, New York. "We had a group of women

here in the community who already knew how to weave. They wanted to improve their skills, so we set up a workshop with Anastasia Tomasaitis in Canada." Since then, Mrs. Skucas has woven belts for her children's dance costumes as well as sashes and pillows for friends or donations for church raffles. "I find weaving to be very relaxing," she says, "Maybe I'll have time to do more after I retire."

Elizabeth Miller, Amish Quilting. Scholars believe that quilting, stitching padding between two layers of fabric, originated in China where it was used to add warmth to clothing. The practice of quilting was transported to Europe during the Middle Ages, and arrived in the United States with the first colonists. Decorative quilting, as we know it today, came of age in the United States. Since fabrics were not plentiful or readily available in many parts of the young nation, creative - and frugal - women recycled used cloth of every kind in patchwork quilts.

Elizabeth Miller grew up in a traditional Amish community near Conewango Valley, New York. As one of the oldest of 11 children, she was needed to work the family farm, but also found time to do some quilting. After marriage, when a series of medical emergencies left her family with large debts, she turned to quilting to earn additional income.

Mrs. Miller pieces her quilts on a treadle sewing machine with help from her two daughters. Once the quilt top is completed, the batting and backing are attached and secured to a frame. Mrs. Miller then "invites a few women in" to do the actual quilting. Although the designs of Amish quilts have changed little, fiber-blended fabrics and polyester batting have replaced the all-cotton materials previously used. Amish women do make quilts in other than traditional Amish designs for sale to customers from outside their communities.

It is an Amish custom for a mother to provide each of her children with two or three marriage quilts. Mrs. Miller is currently working on a quilt in a pattern called "Sunshine and Shadow" or "Trip Around the World" for her oldest son. There are three more children who will need marriage quilts. Even after that work is completed, Mrs. Miller says, "I can't ever imagine myself not quilting!"

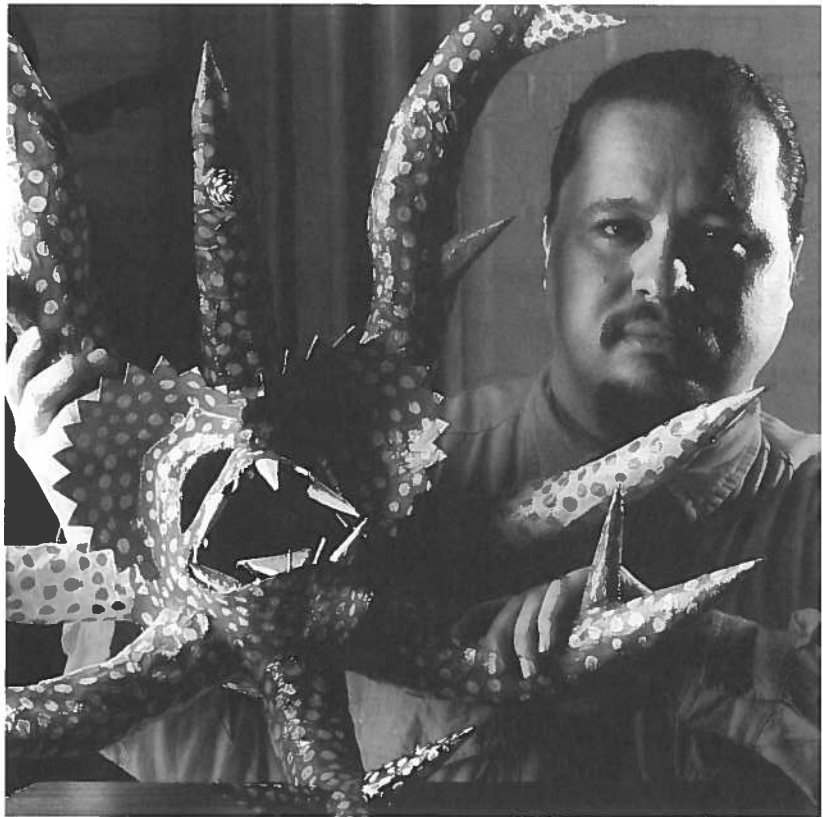
Mrs. Miller's religious beliefs prohibit the use of her photo.

Cesar Romero, Puerto Rican Carnival Masks. Carnival has been celebrated in Cesar Romero's hometown of Ponce, Puerto Rico since 1858. Held before the beginning of Lent on Ash Wednesday, Carnival has traditionally been a time of feasting and revelry when standard rules of behavior are suspended or even reversed.

Carnival has its roots in pagan festivals dating back to the civilizations of Rome and Greece. In ancient times, carnival masks often represented gods from the underworld or spirits of the dead. Some of the best known Puerto Rican carnival masks, including the many-horned vejigante, may have originally represented gods of nature or fertility.

In Ponce, elements of colonial Spanish, African, and native Indian cultures are combined in carnival, which lasts "anywhere from three to six days depending on the mood of the people," according to Mr. Romero. The festivities begin with the entrance of King Momo, a comic figure usually played by a well-respected member of the community, who over-see all carnival events. Those who guess the King's secret identity are awarded prizes on the last day of carnival. Other carnival traditions include a parade, street music and dancing, and the crowning of a carnival queen.

Cesar Romero was awed by the colorful spectacle of carnival as a boy of six or seven. He began to "mask", or participate in carnival dressed in mask and costume, as a teenager. After deciding to learn to make traditional papier-mache masks in 1980, he began to work with the Alindato family who have been creating carnival masks in Ponce for several generations.





Yoshiko Tanigaki, Japanese Origami. Born on Sapporo Island off the northern coast of Japan, Yoshiko Tanigaki first learned origami in kindergarten. Making origami "is a game for children in Japan," she explains. "Children sit together eating lunch and use their napkins to show each other the origami shapes they know. Making something out of a little square of paper is like magic for children." Mrs. Tanigaki's interest in origami was reawakened in 1979 when she participated in an ethnic festival in Buffalo, New York. Currently, she is working with Buffalo school children to make necklaces out of origami peace cranes for each of the estimated 5000 athletes participating in World University Games Buffalo '93.

Origami developed in Japan after the introduction of paper from China around the 7th century. Scholars believe that some of the first paper foldings in Japan were used in religious rituals. Many early paper folding techniques were also used to make decorative utilitarian objects including envelopes, chopstick holders, and boxes for serving food. There is also evidence that, hundreds of years ago, the Japanese wrote love poems on paper they folded into the shapes of flowers or birds.

While there are still traditional uses for origami, Mrs. Tanigaki has seen "modern" origami evolve into a fine art practiced by professional artists during the last twenty years. The availability of a wide variety of papers and how-to books have contributed to origami's growing popularity. Organizations of origami makers in New York and Toronto offer formal workshops in paper folding. Recently, some origami makers have begun to use computers to design new shapes made from one hundred or more folds.

The owner of "Japan on Elmwood" in Buffalo, Mrs. Tanigaki would like to turn her shop into "a center for Japanese culture with classes in origami and other traditional arts."

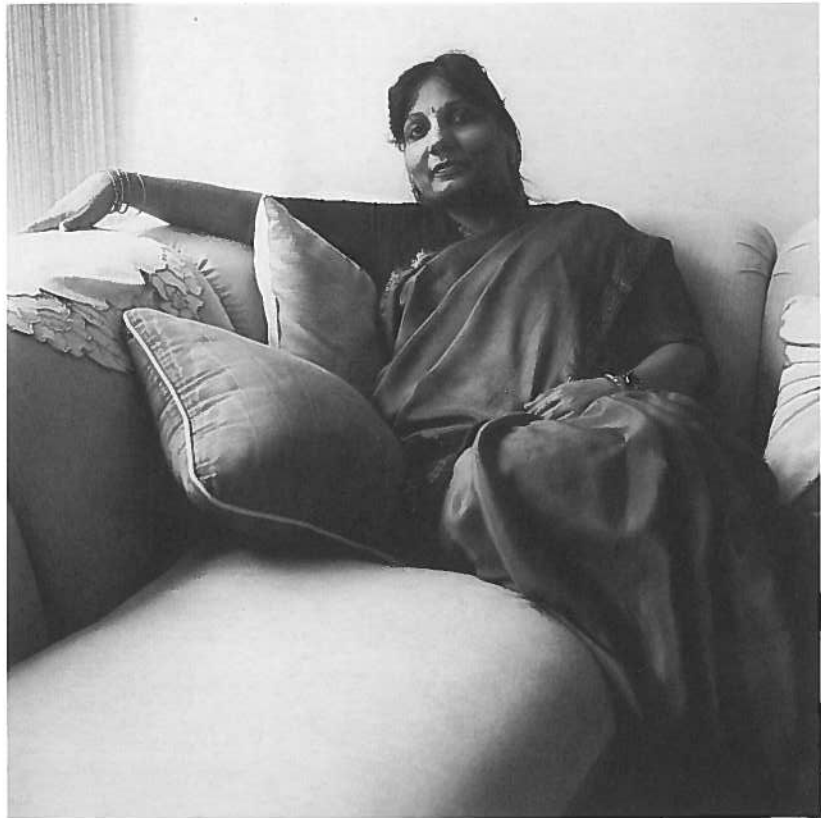
Ganga Pansari, East Indian Mehendi. In India, the term “mehendi” refers to a dye made from the henna plant as well as to decorative designs drawn on the body using the dye. The use of henna as a body dye can be traced back to ancient Egypt where mummies with henna tinted hair and nails have been discovered. Scholars believe that mehendi was introduced to India in the 12th century. Although mehendi is mainly used in India as a decoration for a bride’s hands and feet, it is also applied to both men and women for a variety of religious celebrations.

To make mehendi dye, ground henna leaves are mixed with water or cooled tea. Some mehendi artists add a bit of sugar to the paste to help it cling to the skin. Until the 1980s, the paste was applied with a fingertip or a small stick. Now many mehendi artists draw their designs using small plastic sandwich bags filled with henna paste and pierced with a hole in one corner. The plastic bags, referred to as “cones”, have made the application of henna paste much easier and enable artists to create more finely detailed designs.

Henna paste designs must dry on the skin for at least several hours. The longer the paste dries, the deeper will be the color of the finished decoration. When the paste is scraped off, a vivid “tattoo”, ranging in color from an orange-yellow to a deep maroon, is revealed. Mehendi decorations can last for up to a month. “In India,” Mrs. Pansari explains, “we say a bride who’s mehendi fades too quickly has gotten a bad husband because he is making her do too much housework.”

Ganga Pansari learned the art of mehendi from her mother while growing up in India. She remembers sitting with the women in her family in the evenings during hot weather, watching as they took turns applying mehendi to each other’s hands and feet. The cool paste was believed to draw heat out of the body. Mrs. Pansari’s mother was a particularly gifted mehendi artist who often got requests to decorate brides for their weddings.

Mrs. Pansari and her family arrived in Rochester, New York in 1978. She continues to apply mehendi for family and friends, and has begun to teach the art to others. “This is a family art that will always remind me of my mother’s skill and intelligence,” she says.





Manychanh Khonsavanh, Laotian Weaving. In Laos, female elders have traditionally had the responsibility of teaching young girls the skills of the loom to ensure them a trade. Today, many Laotian women continue to weave some of their own clothing, particularly the skirts and scarves that are worn for special occasions. Many of these weavings are patterned with animals, including elephants and birds, whose influences are thought to be beneficial to the wearer.

As a young girl, Manychanh Khonsavanh spent many hours watching her mother weave. She soon learned to weave cloth for her whole family. Weaving later helped her survive life in a Thai refugee camp, where she made more than one hundred skirts and scarves to sell to the local people. Now resettled in Rochester, New York, Manychanh uses a handmade Laotian loom to weave for relatives and friends who prefer to wear traditional clothing for holidays and community celebrations.

