

**THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL
TRUST OF AUSTRALIA.**

REPORT: Dr NORIS IOANNOU - 1996 FELLOW.

**PROJECT: *TO STUDY FOLK ART COLLECTIONS,
ARTISTS AND SCHOLARSHIP IN THE USA.***

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS 4

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 5

PROGRAMME 6

MAIN REPORT 9

CONCLUSIONS & POSTSCRIPT 37

CONTACT DETAILS 38

INTRODUCTION

Summary and Acknowledgments:

My Fellowship project aimed to give me exposure and experience of American folk art in all of its diverse expressions and cultural meanings. Ultimately, this research would be the basis for a similar project in Australia, concluding with a major book on the history of Australian folk art.

DETERMINING THE BOUNDARIES AND PRESENT-DAY DEFINITION OF FOLK ART, WAS AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF THE INVESTIGATION.

The project was therefore based on a programme which was designed to give me access to: Folk art institutions and museums, pre-eminent folklorist scholars and folk artists around North America, and private collections of folk art for viewing and documentation. In addition, a decorative arts seminar was attended, and contact and discussions with many authors, curators, museum directors, college professors and researchers in folk art was arranged.

Visits and contact with 'living' folk artists were also arranged in order to interview and document the actual activity and setting of folk art production. North American folk art collections and contemporary folk, 'outsider', naive and self-taught creativity around the country was included. **This study was conducted in a multi-cultural context and included: endemic, native North American Indian communities; European, and Hispanic and African-American communities and traditions as they have informed contemporary American folk art and craft.**

The programme included general observations of folk and popular art and culture about the country, in order that a comprehensive understanding of American folk art and its connectedness to everyday life would be achieved.

Records of interviews, observations and collections were made through the use of notes, photographic slides and a collection of books, pamphlets etc.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS :

This Fellowship programme relied on the assistance of many people - both in Australia and in the US. Of those in the US, I trust their inclusion in the main report is sufficient recognition of their kindness in giving me their time in assisting me in my investigations, and in sharing with me their ideas and knowledge.

In Australia, there are a number of people I would like to thank for their support, guidance and encouragement. In South Australia I would like to thank Tony Phillips, President of the Churchill Fellows Association of SA, and the committee. Their organisation of a 'Helpful Hints' evening was appreciated. Thanks to my mentors, Algis and Carlene Butavicius who were also very generous in their support and interest.

Of the personnel of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust, I would like to thank all those concerned including Ian Richards, CEO, and specifically I wish to extend my thanks

to Mrs Elvie Munday - for her support, kind words and secure presence.

I would like to note that I felt proud to be travelling under the sponsorship of the Winston Churchill Memorial Trust; it conferred to me a special status and I felt honoured to explain its establishment and meaning to many people I met on my study tour. I used the 'business card' which the Trust supplied to me extensively and feel that, in my own way, as one of the dozens of other Churchill Fellows, evoked the deeds and memory of Sir Winston Churchill.

Having completed my Fellowship, at least the 'travelling segment', I look forward to utilising, over the next few years, the richness of experience which I have gained for the benefit or enrichment of my community and country. It is also clear to me that, once a Churchill Fellow, always a Churchill fellow!

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Dr NORIS IOANNOU

Po Box 1215 Collingwood, Melbourne,
Victoria

Email: noris.ioannou@internode.on.net

Web Site: www.norisioannou.com.au

PROJECT DESCRIPTION: *TO STUDY FOLK ART COLLECTIONS, ARTISTS, AND SCHOLARSHIP IN THE USA.*

The following people were especially helpful and generous with their assistance. At the Institute of American Folklore (in the University of Indiana), Professor Henry Glassie extended to me a very warm welcome. he spent considerable time with me in discussions of the subject matter; he also made some valuable suggestions regarding the rest of my itinerary.

Professor John Burrison of the Georgia State University, was similarly helpful; he also volunteered to accompany me out on one of my major field trips north of Atlanta, assisting in my introduction to folk potters.

Professor Terry Zug, of the University of North Carolina, arranged visits to Seagrove Potteries region and was generous in the time he spent with me in discussions and in introducing his colleagues to me.

In Philadelphia, Dr Susan Isaacs, folklorist, accompanied me to a number of institutions and other sites, and made a number of valuable suggestions regarding my fellowship tour.

In New York, Gerard Wertkins, the director of the Museum of American Folk Art, was also generous in the time he set aside to accompany me on tours of a number of folk art collections, as well as arranging a visit to see an important private collection.

Valuable contacts in the Museum of New Mexico in Sante Fe, New Mexico, included Ms Charlene Cerny, Director of the Museum of International Folk Art; Dr Bruce Berstein, Director of the Museum Indian Arts and Culture. Particularly helpful was Ms Tammi Nilsen, curator Indian Arts at the Museum Indian Arts and Culture. She arranged visits to American Indian artists and sites, as well as one memorable visit to an Indian Pueblo to view a traditional 'corn dance'.

PROGRAMME DETAILS:

14-17 APRIL in Bloomington, Indiana: Institute of American Folklore and University of Indiana, Professor Henry Glassie; Dr Kathy Foster; Professor Ilhan Basgoz; Bloomington Research Collection; local vernacular architecture of mid-west.

17-20 APRIL in Atlanta, Georgia. Professor John Burrison (Georgia State University); 18th: Southern Decorative Arts Symposium at Atlanta History Centre; 19-20th, field trip, working folk potteries visits: Chester Hewell Pottery, and Meaders Pottery.

20-27 APRIL in Chapel Hill, North Carolina. University of North Carolina with Professor Terry Zug; Visits to Seagrove Potteries region; visit to Marc Hewitt Pottery; 23-24th, Old Salem crafts field trip; 25-26, field trip to Catabwa Valley Potteries District.

27-30 APRIL in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Dr Susan Isaacs, folklorist; Professor Emeritus Pennsylvania University Don Yoder. 28th, examine Barnes Foundation collection; 29th, visit Henry Chapman Mercer Museum and Moravian Pottery and Tile Works Studio.

30 April-9 MAY in New York, New York. 1 May, Metropolitan Museum of Art, folk collections research; 2-7 May, Director of Museum of American Folk Art, Mr Gerard Wertkins. Quilt Exhibition opening, Museum folk art ongoing library and collections research; 8 May, view Ralph Esmerian Collection of Folk Art; and Whitney Museum of American Art.

9-15 MAY in Savannah and Charleston, South Carolina. 9-10 May in Savannah, view Ulysses Davis folk art collection in the Beech Institute; 11th, interview folk artists at annual Riverside Arts Fair. 13-15th, in Charleston: examine Afro-American basket makers town market; visit Ms Dale Rosengarten, lecturer Charleston College; field trip to McClellanville for interviews with master basketmakers.

16 May-5 JUNE in Sante Fe, New Mexico: contacts in the Museum of New Mexico which consists of four principal institutions: the Museum of International Folk Art, the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, and the Palace of the Governors. Among the meetings attended over this period were those with: Ms Charlene Cerny, Director of the Museum of International Folk Art; with Joyce Ice, assistant director; Dr Frank Korom, curator of Asian and Middel-Eastern Collections; and Ms Mariah Sacoman, curator of Contemporary Southwestern Hispanic Folk Art. At the Museum Indian Arts and Culture: Dr Bruce Berstein, Director; Ms Tammi Nilsen, curator Indian Arts; and Mr Curtis Schaafsma, curator of Anthropology.

Activities in Sante Fe (annotated summary): Discussions, Interviews and Collections study at above three Museums; attendance to major folk art exhibition opening; meeting and discussions with Dr Yvonne Lange Director Emeritus; Field trips to: Bandelier National Monument - Native American Indian settlement/pottery study; Field trips to craft villages: Cimyo - folk weavers; Las Trampas - Hispanic folk arts; Cordova - folk woodcarver; Sante Fe ongoing folk arts market-economy research - Canyon Road galleries, Palace of the Governors (Indian sellers) and other sites. 25th and 26th May: research and interviews with Indian potters in Museum Indian Arts and Culture during `mica market' and `masters market'. 27th, Wheelwright Museum examination of Navaho Indian Collection; 28-29th group meetings and interviews

with Indian potters and textile weavers, Museum Indian Arts and Culture; Interview Mr Marcus Amerman, beadworker; 31st, meeting and interview with Orlando Romero, folk artist, writer and Librarian, New Mexico History Library. June 1st, visit Teseque Pueblo for field trip observations of native Indian folk craft demonstrations. June 2, Indian weaving demonstrations and market, Museum Indian Arts and Culture. June 3, examine Hispanic folk art collections at New Mexico fair market and Museum of International Folk Art; Interview and workshop observations with Mr and Mrs Robert Romero, Hispanic traditional tinworkers; June 4: Interview and workshop observations with Mr Ron and Mr Leroy Archuleto, folk woodcarvers/sculptors. Interview and workshop observations with Mr Richard Dreyfus, tinworker; Interview and workshop observations with Mr Ben Ortega, santos woodcarver, Tesuque.

MAJOR LESSONS LEARNT (annotated):

As I have discovered, the contemporary study of folk art is not as straightforward as the subject may at first suggest; folk art is a complex, and at times, contradictory field because of its focus on the nature of art which emerges from specific community contexts. Because folk art inquiry covers the shifting relationships between area of art, creativity and culture, it is valuable not only for its expression of individuality within community context, but also for the insight it may give on the nature of creativity in our culture, and hence, its potential to contribute and enrich our understanding of ourselves and our contemporary society.

Any inquiry into folk art first necessitates a definition of the term 'Folk art'. From my Fellowship I define this as deriving from a social and cultural perspective to refer to creative visual art practices which spring from the contexts of history, community, personality, and identity.

In the US, the folk arts are expressed by indigeneous North American Indian people, and by European migrants, and by African-Americans. These groups have vital folk art

traditions which are utilised to define identity; express ethnic roots; express an inner individual need; and to affirm community identity or needs.

Folk art is a vital cultural resource within the life of any community where its expression is permitted and encouraged.

Folk art is an everyday art. It fulfills the utilitarian, spiritual, and aesthetic needs of ordinary people. Folk art helps to shape, signal and sustain the cultural values of a given community.

As a result, I feel that I can now approach the study and writing of **a comprehensive book on Australia Folk Art** with confidence. Perhaps the most important lesson learnt is the necessity to remain open to the possibilities and richness of expression of folk art.

MAIN REPORT

My investigations into American folk art were on the one hand very focussed insofar as the following specific inquiries were uppermost, yet, on the other hand, also open, as I realised early on that any pre-conceptions I held concerning the definition and meaning of folk art would surely change!

Among my inquiries, I was therefore interested in initiating dialogue with authorities and academics in the field, hearing their views on the definitions and meaning of folk art. In addition, by viewing collections of historic and contemporary folk art, I would gain an insight into past and present ideas and views on the subject. I also planned and looked forward to field trips to working folk artist `studios' or sites where I could observe creativity and conduct interviews with actual artists. The latter became an important means of coming to understand the aesthetics, influences and inspirations of folk art, as well as exposing the community setting in which it was created and expressed.

My Churchill Fellowship study of American folk art began when I arrived at the University of Indiana, Bloomington, Indiana. Bloomington is a University town set on the windswept corn plains of the north mid-west. There, I met Professor Henry Glassie, Head of the Department of Folklore and Director of the Institute of American Folklore. Henry Glassie has published a number of books on American and Turkish folk art. He was aware of my own publications and sent considerable time with me in discussions of folk art as a prelude to the main body of my trip where I would be seeing and interacting with folk art and artists.

Glassie considers that while folklore embraces tradition and variation, art equates with the sensual and intellectual; `folk art therefore embraces the totality of objects that vary at the pleasure of their creators while holding steady over time to preserve and express a culture's deepest ideas'. Glassie suggested a set of characteristics which

distinguished folk art from fine art: rural: urban;
communal: individualistic; stable: changing; sacred:
secular; abstract: realistic; informal: formal, and so on.
These are of course, generalisations, and ultimately, folk
art definitions overlap with those of fine art.

Between myself and Glassie, we derived a set of inquiries
which would assist my subsequent explorations of folk art.
Why do they make the things they do? How do they
conceptualise form? What experiences affect their
creativity, the way they proceed in construction, the forms
they produce? What does the making of the items mean,
express or symbolise? What values inform the making process?

Other discussions included the nature of tradition and
replication. Those who self-consciously reproduced older
folk forms could not be considered folk artists. Tradition
and reproduction are opposite modes: tradition includes an
operation of individual change, whereas reproduction is a
kind of replication which copies without individual
creativity.

Henry Glassie, a tall, quietly-spoken and moustached man who
occasionally smokes a pipe, also showed me his extraordinary
collection of folk art, culled from his life on the east
coast and from his overseas studies of Turkish folk art. He
also introduced me to a number of other specialists in the
field with whom I conducted informal discussions including Dr
Kathy Foster, and Professor Ilhan Basgoz, the latter a
Turkish-American authority in folklore.

At the University of Indiana I also had the opportunity to
survey and selectively read their comprehensive collection
of books on folk art, referred to as the Bloomington
Research Collection.

**Armed and informed with this introduction, I left the cold
northern plains of Indiana where the trees had hardly begun
to leaf and where even tulips had just started to bloom
because of the unseasonal and extended cold winter, and
headed south to the green forests, warmth and humidity of
Atlanta, Georgia.**

This part of my journey initiated my studies specifically in Southern Folk Art Traditions as carried out by both African and European-Americans.

Professor John Burrison is an expert on folk pottery and lectures at the Georgia State University. He accompanied me to the Southern Decorative Arts Symposium at the splendid Atlanta History Centre where I listened to a number of authorities on southern folk arts speak, including Ms Laurel Horton on 'Quilts, historic and contemporary'; and Ms Deanne Levison on 'Southern Furniture: Plain and Fancy'.

Laurel Horton's talk focussed on the traditions and variations in meanings in cultural behaviour as expressed by quilts. She talked of regional variations but noted how each quilt is a product of individual design, and how some quilts function in a ceremonial manner. The wealth of designs was astounding.

Burrison himself talked on 'The Uses of Southern Pottery'. He spoke of the way the special functions of pottery reflected aspects of social life in early Georgia - such as the jugs used in 'moonshining'. He also spoke of the links between southern pottery traditions and the African-American influences on these - especially the strange face jugs that distinguish these traditions. There is one school of thought that suggests that the idea of these face was brought over by black slaves from Africa. By the early 20th century these face jugs had assumed an expression of humorous and masculine aesthetic and were henceforth made for tourist purposes.

I later met up with all of these speakers for further discussions.

The modern Atlanta History Centre is set in beautiful gardens and grounds and includes a working early 19th century American 'working' farm, where I had the opportunity to take a tour and examine folk building styles, furniture, blacksmithing, pottery and foodways.

Over the next two days, Professor Burrison and I took an overnight trip one hour north of Atlanta to visit a number of 19-20th working folk potteries. Pottery making in the south is considered one of the oldest uninterrupted craft traditions practised in the USA (with the exception of those of the North American Indians - see later). Southern pottery making began in the Virginia colonies in the mid-17th century, from where it spread to the other southern colonies.

At the Chester Hewell Pottery, Burrison introduced me to three generations of potters: the grandfather (70 years old), grandmother (63), the master Chester Hewell (45), and his two sons (19 and 23). Although they make their main income from a large, mechanised garden pots factory, they still retain the old potworks of previous generations where they make a line of tourist and collector's wares, including the traditional 'face jugs'.

The Hewells are true folk potters in that they are linked to tradition in their work and through generational ties, and in the style in which they make their folkwares in an 'old-time kiln and workshop'. The Hewell pottery was initiated during the Civil War. All of the descendants began work in the pottery at an early age, Chester's son Matthew beginning at age three! Chester Hewell and his family spoke with the typical southern drawl. Chester was somewhat of a 'character' in himself - always joking- yet always taking delight and pride in demonstrating his techniques, talking about his forebears and his work. They invited us to stay overnight on their nearby farm where I had an opportunity to examine Chester's collection of early folk pottery made by his ancestors, including the 'ugly' face jugs (as they are called).

All southern folk pottery is stoneware and glazed with alkaline glazes. The forms include the usual functional shapes and always the famous ugly face jugs so treasured by collectors who purchase these during special kiln opening days. The attraction of these jugs is their link to the past - their nostalgic associations.

Chester also took us to visit an older folk potter in the area, Lenear Meader. Lenear was unwell due to a recent operation. He was a huge man who spoke slowly and insisted we try his special 'white lightening', cough mixture, actually moonshine - distilled apple cider (very strong)!

In this region, over the 19th and early 20th centuries, pottery families intermarried to retain glaze formulas and other secrets, forming a familial guild over the countryside. In this manner they maintained a distinctive identity through geneological 'conversation', and which, together with their potmaking, delineates their culture. The Hewells and the Meaders are the sole survivors of this tradition.

After Georgia, I traveled to Raleigh-Durham in central North Carolina, from whence I ended up at the university town of Chapel Hill. There, I joined Professor Terry Zug (University of North Carolina) who kindly invited me to stay with him during this leg of my journey and my continuing research into Southern Folk Art Traditions.

This included day visits to the Seagrove Potteries region where over 30 potteries flourish! I was lucky to coincide this visit with the annual spring day when many people come to the potteries to purchase works recently made. Of these potteries, the most interesting for me were those that had managed to keep a sense of integrity, that is preserve the quality of their work despite the huge tourist influx.

Jugtown pottery was interesting for its revival of art wares from the 1920s. Potteries continued to make the ubiquitous face jugs. I met with Sid Luck (Luck's Pottery), a very nice man, fifth generation, who spoke quietly of his traditions and work. He continues to dig his own clay and make his own glazes according to old methods. My five other pottery visits in Seagrove included: Kings; Turn and Burn; Lddk; Phil Mogan; and J.B. Coles. I conducted interviews and took photographs and generally noted the set up and work and pottery styles of these places.

There is no doubt that the spring day and special kiln openings keep a sense of celebration and excitement which attracts the audience which supports this large number of small potteries.

A visit to Old Salem was also essential. Only two hours from Chapel Hill, Old Salem is a settlement established in the 1780s by the conservative protestant sect called the Moravians who fled persecution in Germany. The Salem settlement was a Bible town, established as an independent entity from the English colonists. The Moravians were a strict sect who controlled their cultural identity and community coherence by setting up specialist craftworks - weaving, pottery, and furniture-making - which supplied the surrounding colonists for many years. Today, Old Salem is preserved as a working history town. I spent a day walking its quaint streets, drinking in the atmosphere as it must have once been, of such an early settlement, one where the folk crafts existed to support a close-knit community and highly pious life. Indeed, the high quality of their folk crafts reflected their strong religious underpinning.

I observed and documented potters, carpenters and other craftsmen, dressed in period costume, making articles using time-honored techniques and styles. I also took a tour of the important Museum of Southern decorative Arts where I saw an large range of crafts from the 17th to early 19th century displayed in period room settings.

My final study in North Carolina included a field trip to the Catawba Valley Potteries District. Driving out into the green countryside was a pleasure! The deciduous forests are so verdant, and the flowering spring dogwoods with their floppy large white petals put on a display which is the equivalent, in my eyes, of the winter and spring flowering of wattles in Australia.

Here I visited three particular potters who were maintaining a folk tradition established in the early 18th century. Joe Reinhardt makes face jugs with his own interesting innovative additions. He showed me his groundhog kiln, the type used by most potters in the region. I then drove over to Burlon Craig, one of the oldest survivors of the Catawba

Valley tradition. His face jugs are especially similar to the early types, and when he has a spring opening, his pots sell in minutes to hundreds of buyers who scramble to grab the pots straight from the kiln! He showed me around the old workshop and kiln, and gave me an opportunity to take some excellent photographs of himself and his work. Finally I met up with Albert Hodge. Albert was a rotund, jovial man who made pottery in a somewhat 'imitative' folk style - racoons, owls, face jugs and decorative vases. Most of his work was figurative and highly imaginative, although he retained the forms, glazes and look of the early folk pottery of the region. He actually calls himself a folk potter (none of the others are so self-conscious)!

I also had a chance to view the extraordinary folk art collection of Clyde Jones, a so-called 'outsider artist'. His work consisted of chain-saw cut logs of wood which he assembled and painted to resemble animal sculptures. Hundreds of these covered the grounds of his humble cottage, itself painted with aspects of his extraordinary visions. Outsider art was a variation of folk art which I came to recognise increasingly during my tour.

After these southern states, I travelled north (back into the cold) into Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Here, the traditions departed from African-American to be entirely based on Anglo-European craft traditions as transplanted by the early settlers. I joined Dr Susan Isaacs, and Dr Hugo Freund folklorists who, over the next four days, showed me their Pennsylvania Dutch pottery collections, engaged into discussion on folk art with me, and took me out on visits to various institutions.

I also met Professor Emeritus (Pennsylvania University) Don Yoder, folklorist, who had his view of folk art to add to my accumulating ideas. During this outing I also visited the extraordinary Henry Chapman Mercer Museum and Moravian Pottery and Tile Works Studio in Doylestown. The museum is extraordinary in that the building itself is made entirely from reinforced concrete in c. 1900 and houses the most comprehensive collection of over 50,000 early craft tools and artefacts as collected by Mercer in the late 19th century. Mercer realised that industrialisation was

destroying the old folk craft skills and set out to document and collect as much of these folk traditions as possible. Henry Mercer was an archaeologist, historian, potter, builder, writer and visionary. His collection which he called 'The Tools of the Nation Maker' are a valuable primary source material for historians and researchers such as myself. The collection includes more than 60 early American crafts from wood-working, agricultural, textile and other tools which built the nation. He later became a potter and established the Moravian Pottery and Tile Works.

At the Barnes Foundation I had the opportunity to view folk arts placed in a setting which included one of the best collections of impressionist and post-impressionist art in the US. Here, excellent examples of Pennsylvania Dutch pottery and furniture could be seen juxtaposed with Matisse, Picasso and Henri Rosseau oil paintings!

When I completed my Philadelphia work, a short train trip north through the urban eastern seaboard brought me into metropolitan New York, where the contrast between the green forests of North Carolina and the towering skyscrapers could hardly be greater!

In New York, I spent considerable time in the major museums, notably, the Metropolitan Museum of Art where their extensive decorative arts and folk collections could be researched; the Whitney Museum of American Art which has some folk art; and the Museum of the City of New York which has an interesting mixture and displays of early crafts.

Perhaps the most rewarding aspect of this visit in New York was my contact with the Director of the Museum of American Folk Art, Mr Gerard Wertkins. A very pleasant and genial New Yorker Mr Wertkins was very generous with his time with me. I had forwarded a copy of my *Barossa Folk* Book to him, and he and his staff were apparently very impressed with it. He took me to the opening of the Museum's Quilt and Contemporary Doll Exhibition; he showed me their permanent displays of folk art; and he took me to view a very famous and private folk art collection: the Ralph Esmerian Collection of Folk Art. This was 'displayed' in the owner's Madison Avenue apartment and consisted of a splendid

collection of folk paintings, furniture, carvings, textiles and pottery, much of it by Pennsylvanian German and other 18th and 19th century folk artists.

I also had dinner with Gerry Wertkins which gave even further opportunity to discuss ideas of folk art. The Museum of American Folk Art also has an excellent folk art library where I spent considerable time reading, and taking notes.

The Museum of American Folk Art has extensive holdings of some of the countries prime examples which range from whirly-gigs, to a gate made to appear as the American flag, furniture, plaster carvings, many naive or folk art portraits and other works. Their collection of quilts is especially extensive, with some of the finer examples in view during the exhibition. Indeed, quilt exhibitions are an almost annual occurrence there, and quilts from the Museum's collection often tour the world. The Museum's commitment to both the past and present of American quilting culminated with the present exhibition of their masterpieces. The interpretation of the patterns and origins of these quilts was an aspect of my discussions; All of the major American quilting traditions are represented: whole-cloth quilts, chintz quilts, signature and album quilts, applique quilts, pieced quilts, log cabin quilts, Victorian show quilts, Amish quilts, colonial revival quilts, African-American quilts and contemporary quilts. The designs were dazzling, colour combinations extraordinary and innovative use of fabrics a hallmark of these masterpieces on display. It gave me an excellent grounding in this most quintessential American folk art form.

I also took the opportunity while in New York to visit the American Museum of Craft in order to gain an insight into contemporary crafting directions.

After new York, it was a relief not to have to travel underground on the subway, and to travel back down to the southern states to green, humid and hot South Carolina. In this place I could study both African-American and European-American traditions and their interactions.

Beginning in the small and historic town of Savannah with its beautiful shady green squares and rows of preserved federal, Regency and Ante Bellum (pre-Civil war) houses adorned with intricate iron cast balconies, I made arrangements and went to view the Ulysses Davis Folk Art Collection in the Beach Institute. I also viewed black folk arts in the preserved King-Tisdell Cottage. But the Ulysses Davis Folk Art Collection was especially alluring: a barber who had extraordinary creative energy, Davis carved over 200 figures in wood, the style reminiscent of African carving techniques yet the overall appearance bursting with a singular vision. Davis (1913-1990), possessed great talent as a woodcarver and was proud of being both African and American, his work expressing the melding of these two cultures. Religious and patriotic themes are typical of his work. such as his four renowned crucifixes and his 'Garden of Eden', and a series of busts of the presidents of the United States. he was clearly a highly spiritual person, his work reflecting this spirituality through its form and symbolism.

Next, I planned to interview folk artists at annual Riverside Arts Fair. Here, on the cobbled waterfront, folk artists had set up stalls to display and sell their arts. These included the self-humorous Robert Seven who works in 'spoon art', and the making of unusual musical instruments; Brian Dowdall (b. 1948) and whand wood - to make 'sand creatures' and to paint vibrant animal images. As a self-taught artist he is represented in numerous collections and is documented in American publications. he refers to his work as 'spirit paintings', and similar to most folk artists has a spiritual perspective on life which is reflected in his work. Norma Smith painted scenes from everyday life using small school slate boards for her canvases. Sam McMillan, an African-American made and painted folk furniture.

After Savannah, I drove through the flat, low-land country to the historic town of Charleston. This is considered one of the most elegant cities in the US. It was a compelling place: the hitoric district is lined with tall, narrow houses of stucco adorned with shutters and iron-work balconies made by slaves from Barbados. Palm trees, the

southern drawl and a tropical climate evoke a Caribbean or new orleans atmosphere.

Founded in 1670 by wealthy English families, it was the last of the British colonies to be established in America, and the only walled settlement. Its situation at the tip of a peninsula and the Atlantic beyond adds another fascinating dimension. It was in Charleston that the American Civil War started with the first shots.

The Gullah traditions of the South Carolina Mt Pleasant region and off-shore Sea Islands was established by the black slaves. These traditions included the distinctive accents, but more interesting for me - and the main reason for my visit - was the sweetgrass basketweaving folk craft. This activity was first introduced by slaves who came from West Africa, and has been passed on from generation to generation. Today, it is arguably one of the oldest folk art forms of African origin in the US. South Carolina is the only place where this type of basketry is practised by descendants of the African slaves. During the slave period, rice cultivation flourished in the plantations about the Old South, and baskets were in great demand for agricultural use. large work baskets were woven and used to collect and store vegetables, cotton, fish and other foods. Initially, men made large baskets from bullrushes, while the women made smaller baskets for home use using sweetgrass (*Muhlenbergia filipes*). The demise of slavery saw black families acquiring land and starting a new life. As an important part of their cultural heritage its continuity is one means of maintaining African roots and identity. By keeping the tradition alive, the memory of homeland origins remains strong.

In Charleston, I set out to examine the descendants of these African-American basket makers. First I visited the town market where the 'basket ladies' came each morning to display their baskets and demonstrate their weaving skills. Here, the observations of their interactions with the numerous tourists was interesting. I also had made contact with a chief investigator of this folk craft, Ms Dale Rosengarten, lecturer Charleston College. After an initial visit, Ms Rosengarten pointed me in the direction of the master weavers, those who were accessible.

I therefore took a field trip towards the north along the coast from Charleston and stopped alongside two of the traditional roadside stalls where basket weavers ply their wares. The revival of basketweaving in the 1930s for tourist reasons has continued to this day. Here I interviewed two master basketmakers..Elizabeth Mazyck (b.1944), was a particularly interesting and lovely lady Robust with a soft voice and strong accent, she explained the process and demonstrated her technique. She had been making baskets for 44 years, having been taught by here Aunt! `I takes my time to make nice and tight weaving'. Materials used are sweetgrass, pine needle and palmetto (palm leaf strands). These are collected from Louise Island and other places, although material is getting scarce, especially the sweetgrass. After drying, she uses a spoon handle to `rope the palmetto, holding bundles of sweetgrass'. Shapes are copied from earlier baskets and from colleagues. Rigorous craftsmanship and long hours of work are necessary for most of the larger pieces and 10-12 hours may be necessary to execute a larger basket. It's a continuous tradition, going back in Elizabeth's case to four generations. Customers are regular, besides tourists and she can sell baskets up to \$350 each!

There has been little change from the original baskets which were made for necessity, not for decoration, nostalgic or tourist purposes. However, urban expansion has forced these roadside basket makers to move further north, development of the coastline has seen the sweetgrass resource decline alarmingly. Still, the Lowcountry basketmakers remain defiant and continue to work and pass on their skills to daughters and granddaughters. While these baskets remain a visible part of the landscape - they assert the African origins and proud heritage of their makers. Now in continuous production since the 18th century, these Lowcountry coil baskets are seen as a collectable investment by Museums and private collectors. It is also important to note that South Carolina is one of the poorest and rural regions of the US. There is a high unemployment rate, especially among the African Americans. Lowcountry basketmakers I met, including Elizabeth, supplement considerable the husband's meagre income through this craft

activity. Maintaining this folk art is therefore more than a nostalgic activity, and entails important cultural heritage and economic reasons.

Later, I drove out to visit Dale Rosengarten out at McClennanville, some two hours drive north of Charleston. She showed me her basket collection and discussed with me aspects of the old and new tradition. This was a delightful trip which gave me some insight into how one American family lived: the husband Ted, an author-historian, both living in a secluded location in a fairly wild swampy site and in a western red cedar home they built themselves. The soft-shelled crab meal they cooked was also traditional - and delicious!

I finished off in Charleston by taking a walking tour of the historic city, and recording the decorative details of the architecture, especially the ornate folk art iron work by past slaves.

Sante Fe, New Mexico: Leaving the deciduous green forests and humidity of the east coast, the final stop in my Churchill Fellowship was New Mexico, a region of soaring cedar and Ponderosa pine treed mountains rising above dry desert plains covered in dark green *Pino* pine and grey fragrant sage bush. Here, after the subdued Georgian architecture of the east, the distinctive and appealing vernacular architecture of adobe impressed and dominated. What an extraordinary contrast to the eastcoast!

Evan more extraordinary is the conjunction of the three cultures of this region and their effects on the New Mexican or Southwestern folk art that has vigorously emerged as a result of the interaction of these peoples with the unique landscape. I speak of the Native American Indians, especially the Pueblo Indians; the Spanish colonists and their descendants, and the Anglo-Americans.

With three weeks set aside (from Thursday 16th May through to June 5th) to study the folk arts of this region, this was the longest stop at any one place in the US on my Fellowship.

I had established a number of contacts prior to leaving (as in the other places) especially with the Museum of New Mexico which actually consists of four principal institutions: the Museum of International Folk Art, the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture, the Museum of Fine Arts, and the Palace of the Governors. Since 1909, the Museum of New Mexico has collected and preserved materials reflecting the history of this region, and today is recognised as one of the nation's outstanding cultural institutions. Each of the museums offers a distinctive perspective on the arts, history and societies of many cultures. The museum also offers research libraries, history and photo archives.

The Palace of the Governors is both a history museum and living history. Its building, on the north side of historic Sante Fe Plaza, is the oldest public building in the US, built in 1610 in adobe, some 10 years before the pilgrims landed at Plymouth on the east coast! It now contains a splendid exhibit of colonial New Mexico (Spanish Life on the Upper Rio Grande) giving visitors a vignette of the history of colonisation and the material culture that developed over that period.

My main museum contacts were with the institution's Museum of International Folk Art and the Laboratory of Anthropology and its associated Museum of Indian Arts and Culture.

At the **Museum of International Folk Art** I had at least three meetings with Ms Charlene Cerny, Director, during which we discussed the institution's mission statement and collecting policy in respect to folk art. The museum's operational definition was stated as: *'Folk arts are defined as expressive traditions characterised by a shared aesthetic that are transmitted within a community such as an ethnic, tribal, local or regional, religious, occupational, age of gender group.'*

I also met Joyce Ice, assistant director, Dr Frank Korom, curator of Asian and Middel-Eastern Collections; and Ms Mariah Sacoman, curator of Contemporary Southwestern Hispanic Folk Art. I also met and had discussions with Dr Yvonne Lange Director Emeritus of this Museum. Dr Lange is a spritely 77-year old woman who was the first director of the

museum and who, in her retirement, continues to research and write, and had some interesting observations to make on the meaning of folk art.

Dr Frank Korom took me on an extended tour of the Museum's extensive storage of folk art which is the world's largest collection comprising over 125,000 artifacts. These collections are categorised by region: Middle-Eastern, Spanish Colonial, Contemporary South-Western Hispanic, Textiles and Costumes. Of these, my personal interest was focussed on the Spanish Colonial and Contemporary South-Western Hispanic, as these collections held material which was made in the region and which therefore represented the output of the local people and their culture.

I also toured and examined the exhibitions drawn from these collections and which are housed in three wings on view in the public spaces of the museum: the Hispanic Heritage Wing of Spanish Colonial and Hispanic folk art; the Girard Wing, an installation of folk toys, textiles and spiritual art; and the Bartlett Wing which presently featured 'Recycled, Re-seen: Folk Art from the Global Scrap Heap'.

I had timed my arrival in Sante Fe to coincide with the opening of this exhibition: 'Recycled, Re-seen: Folk Art from the Global Scrap Heap'. Featuring nearly 700 objects made from recycled industrial materials from 50 nations. Sadly, Australia was not included, although the director and curators had quite a shock when they opened up the gift copy of my book *The Barossa Folk* and 'discovered that Australia had folk and recycled art! Recycled, Re-seen was an interactive exhibition which examined the folk practice of re-use as a global phenomenon in the late 20th century. Thematically organised, it demonstrated how ordinary people are creatively transforming mass-produced rejects of industry into handmade objects of utility, meaning, and beauty. These included the making of musical instruments, shoes, ritual costumes, sculpture, jewellery and other objects. The exhibit showed how people use ingenuity to transform trash into desired objects.

Associated with the opening was a recycled car extravaganza, fair, and recycled art flea market which provided me with the opportunity to examine recycled art processes in action.

I visited the Museum over the three-week period on numerous occasions in order to examine closely the Spanish Colonial folk art collections. This collection contained well-documented pieces which date from the 18th century to the present day and ranges from religious imagery, furniture, tinwork, jewellery, tools, and other works. The range and large number of works provide a basis for the study of cultural change, adaptation to the physical environment, technological innovation, and cultural continuity.

Specifically, I noted how the furniture of colonial New Mexico was constructed mostly from local pine and often painted with organic pigments. Tinwork dated from the 1840s as that was the period American military supplies became available as recycled resources by Hispanic artists for the making of frames for religious images, niches, candle sconces and boxes and I was particularly interested in the 'santos', that is saint-making and painting traditions and generally, and the religious iconography of such works of the region.

All of this historic material and its examination broadened my knowledge and gave me a context for my interviews and observations of contemporary artists.

The museum's library and archives also provided interesting and relevant material for my examination.

At the nearby **Museum of Indian Arts and Culture**, I worked with Ms Tammi Nilsen, curator Indian Arts, and had discussions with Dr Bruce Berstein, the Director, and Mr Curtis Schaafsma, curator of Anthropology.

The Museum of Indian Arts and Culture offered the opportunity to explore the cultures and artistic traditions of the Pueblo, Apache and Navajo peoples, from ancient times to the present. The Museum houses collections of prehistoric and historic pottery, textiles and other works. The changing exhibitions tended to present historic and contemporary

works as a means of highlighting the continuity of traditions between past and present in the cultures of America: 'Natural Belongings: Classic Art Traditions from the Southwest', which included examples of baskets, textiles, jewellery and other items created by North American Indian cultures. And 'From the Earth: Pottery of the Southwest', a long-term exhibition of ancestral, historic and contemporary southwest Indian pottery styles, techniques and materials.

On the weekend of the 25th and 26th May I had the opportunity for extended observations and interviews with Indian potters during the Museum Indian Arts and Culture annual 'Micaceous Pottery Market'. Among those I interviewed was Bea Duran Tioux, of Sioux descent. When 4 years old she would watch her brother weaving so that by age 19 she began to weave. Later she switched to making pottery after watching her grandmother. Similarly Lonnie Vigil is an Indian Mica pottery maker although the scale of his work is larger. These people speak with pride and conviction on the worth of their work.

On Tuesday, 28th May, Ms Tammi Nilsen arranged an informal morning for meeting museum staff and Indian artists. It was a delightful experience with croissants, fruit and cakes and coffee provided during the gathering when I met a number of interesting people. I interviewed Mr Marcus Amerman, who calls himself a beadworker. Beadwork was developed from the time of colonisation in the 17th century. Today, traditional patterns are still produced, but Marcus has extended tradition into innovation making startling designs and images. He exemplifies what I saw frequently in New Mexico, the way traditional folk arts had been transformed into quite contemporary works.

Another contemporary artist I spoke to, Mr Armond Lara, was less a folk artist than a painter, but what interested me was the way he integrated elements and motifs which came from his Indian background into his work. The former included traditional beadwork made by other artists. His philosophical comments on art were also interesting: 'Design work evolves from lifestyle...the Navajo were nomads and therefore had to see the world around them peripherally to

survive - unlike modern man who has tunnel vision...Seeing a wide horizon dictates a lot of the pattern in art work...I'm interested in broadening my audience by integrating the symbols of a number of cultures..I don't want to make statements..I also prefer to work from my subconscious rather than my intellect.' `The essence of something is the same as its spirit', he also added. It is this essence or spirit that the creative artist imbues into his or her work.

On the weekend of the 28-29th I had the further opportunity for group meetings and interviews with Indian textile weavers at the Museum Indian Arts and Culture;

As well as spending some time discussing folk art with curators, directors and artists, as well as studying collections and exhibitions, my other activities included a number of field trips. I took a day trip to the Bandelier National Monument where I could extend my study of traditional craft within the setting of a native American Indian settlement.

Bandelier National Monument is set in spectacular canyon country and contains many cliff and open pueblo ruins of the late pre-historic period. In this striking setting of canyon-slashed slopes of a high plateau country, the Frijoles inhabitants as archaeologists know them, established village settlements as cave rooms carved in the walls of the canyon. The Frijoles inhabitants were farmers and pottery makers. Their pottery being decorated in black and white designs set in a wonderful wilderness area, the visit gave me an opportunity to experience the environment and scale of Indian occupation and life in the past.

On another day I visited Taos Pueblo, north of Taos, some 7500 feet above sea level, it is an intact and flourishing community of two multi-story adobes. These have been continuously occupied for some 800 hundred years, forming one of the most impressive Native American dwelling places still in use. Some of the smaller rooms were open as craft outlets where I had some opportunity to talk to Indian craftspeople. Indeed, besides their effect on reinforcing cultural identity, traditional crafts form an important component of the economic base for these people, and include

mica speckled pottery and silver and turquoise jewellery - a further symbol of these people's enduring heritage.

Pueblo arts and crafts flourish today in the Sante Fe region. Indeed, the vitality and quality of pottery, beadwork, weaving, jewellery and other crafts is almost overpowering and is on display in shops, galleries - and under the portico of the old Palace of the Govenors where Indian people sell directly to the public. Here one can see a staggering range of fine work, much of it centred about traditional designs using silver and combined with turquoise, coral, jet and other gemstones from the surrounding mountains. Southwest Indian jewelry was originally made from shell, turquoise and other materials. The arrival of the Spanish in the Southwest sparked an interest in metalworking in the tribes about Sante Fe: Navajo, Zuni, Hopi and Pueblo. The silver bridles and jewelry of the Spanish Conquistadors inspired early Indian metalsmiths. Present-day work evolved from designs which originate from the 1880s.

On June 2nd, I was invited to a demonstration, held at the Museum of Indian Arts and Culture of traditional Pueblo Weaving and dyeing. Ms Joyce Begay-Foss, a Navajo, was the weaving instructor at the Indian Vocational Education Programme located at Pueblo Pojaque. Through government grants, a programme had been set up to preserve traditional Pueblo weaving through education with classes in original technique and exhibitions of traditional Indian work. Ms Joyce Begay-Foss explained the programme strategy and its aims to me. An award-winning weaver herself, to me, she and her Pueblo Indian students are crossing tribal and gender lines to revive textile arts among American Indian peoples.

Navajo weaving is entirely handmade and ustilises an upright loom (unlike the horizontal Spanish-American loom). Mother traditionally teaches weaving to daughter, while patterns and designs are rarely diagrammed, the young weaver visualising and learning these over the years. Only 25 Rio Grande Pueblo and 28 Hopi weavers are known to still work. Many are quite elderly and they have the advanced understanding and skills. Although early Hispanic weavers copied or adapted Navaho woven designs, the work of the Navajo Indians has remained a distinct folk art tradition.

Joyce also explained how, in the Pre-Columbian period, it was the Pueblo men who were the weavers, not the women, making men's wrap skirts, women's shawls and dresses for religious ceremonies. Initially, cotton, yucca fibre and even human hair, were among the natural fibres used by the Pueblos for weaving. In about 1600, a transfer of skills from Pueblo to the Navajo people occurred. Today, it seems an irony that Navajo people are now teaching the Pueblo Indians skills which were once those of their ancestors. Joyce researches museum collections and revives traditional styles and techniques. She also observes and learns from some of the older weavers. Students are encouraged to use these traditional techniques as well as prepare and use their own dyes made mostly from gathered plants. Joyce does not discourage innovation: she sees the students, and herself as invigorating tradition with new ideas and approaches.

On Saturday, June 1st, I was taken on a visit of Teseque Pueblo. This field trip provided further opportunity for observations of native Indian folk craft demonstration within the setting of the ritual of the 'corn dance'. I was privileged to be able to view the traditional dancing as this ceremony, like many native American Indian rites or traditions, is closed to the public. Photographs were not permitted and my descriptions of the ceremony must be limited to descriptions of their cloths. These included traditional embroidered dresses for the women with headrests, and a kind of embroidered or beaded kilt for the men. Traditional jewelery was also worn. later after the day long dancing in the hot sun, I was invited into one of the homes for a meal or 'feast'. The value of the observations I was able to make was in the way they impressed on me the importance of keeping the traditional ways of the Indians. The folk crafts were a means to supplement the functional, ritualistic and decorative elements of their daily lives. In these native American Indian communities, the making of and maintaining traditional crafts is grounded in the very basis of their existence. As such, their traditional crafts maintain their links to the past.

The Institute of American Indian Arts is another place which fosters Indian traditional and contemporary art. On my visit to this institution I discovered that it holds the philosophy that: 'Culture is critically important to the process of gaining identity and self-actualisation of one's total potential, and a resource for the reinforcement of identity and self-esteem'. Based on this belief, the institute, through a centre for Fine Arts and Cultural Studies, fosters the work of student Indians in various media. Here, contemporary and traditional arts are studied and respected. The Institute gives students the opportunity to explore their heritage, culture and nature of their art. In this manner, traditional folk arts and crafts become a source of pride and study and are revitalised through contemporary art expressions.

Moving from Indian to other, Hispanic and Anglo craft traditions: Other field trips I planned and took during my Sante Fe stay included those to a number of outlying, non-Indian, craft villages. One day I took a trip called 'The High Route' north of Sante Fe, which passes through the pines and aspens of the Sangre Cristo Mountains, and a number of devoutly Catholic villages still occupied by the descendants of the early Spaniards. The first important village stop was at Chimayo, the site of New Mexico's most famous Spanish Colonial church, the adobe Santuario de Chimayo. This church features numerous devotional folk objects and a splendid altar. The beautiful Reredos (series of sacred paintings) of which this church has five, are derived from vernacular baroque design but are true folk paintings in their own right. El Santuario has been called the 'Lourdes of America', because of its attraction as a place of worship and prayer. I observed further examples of such work in the church at the village of Las Trampas.

I especially appreciated seeing the folk paintings and carvings in these ancient New Mexican churches as this was their purpose, their function as holy images of devotion and this was their original context, unlike the often-viewed settings of such items in museum collections.

Aside from the Indian Navajo weavers of New Mexico there are also a number of weavers of Hispanic descent. I met a number

of these on this field trip. At the village of Chimayo I met the Ortega family of weavers. In the early 1700s, one Gabriel Ortega settled in the region, then the last frontier of New Spain. Weaving was one of the Spanish skills he had brought with him, and weaving rugs, blankets and clothes was then a necessary part of survival. By the late 19th century, the isolation of these places diminished and Spanish, Native American and American cultures began to intermix. By the early 1900s, descendants of Gabriel had established a general store which also dealt in their handwoven Chimayo blankets. Now in their 7th and 8th generations, the Ortega family continues to make handwoven rugs, clothes and blankets using time-honoured techniques and styles. I had an opportunity to actually watch their work on old looms and examine their products.

Another family of traditional weavers also worked some miles up the road. These were the Trujillo family of Chimayo, and I was lucky to meet two generations of these people, observe their techniques and work - yarns, often dyed in the workshop from vegetable or industrial dyes, are worked into designs in a free-form manner, sometimes with and other times without a shuttle. I interviewed Irvin and Lisa Trujillo

Hispanic weaving as carried out by these families includes a number of designs, including the Rio Grande, a series of colour bands; Vallero which includes eight-pointed stars' Santillo which features a centre design over a bordered, figured background; and Chimayo, a local design featuring a central geometric pattern and end borders. Today, these contemporary weavers often study and are inspired by historic New Mexican traditional examples, and this and the use of original materials, keeps these weavers in contact with their ancestors. Of course, these people do not simply copy past work, but use it as an inspirational source, suffusing their work with their own creative skills, hence adding a contemporary interpretation to an early folk tradition.

At the village of Cordova I had the opportunity to interview and examine the work of the folk woodcarvers for which this place is famous. Since 1917 when Jose Dolores Lopez took up

woodcarving as a hobby to make gifts and supply the local church with santos, some five generations of the Lopez family in Cordova have continued as woodcarvers. Each generation has passed on the skills to son and daughter. I met Sabanita, born 1938, a aprklin-eyed sun-browed woman with black hair. She learned from her father George and continues to make the very distinctive santos figures, tree-of-life, crucifixes and other carvings. George Lopez won the prestigious Folk Art Award of the Smithsonian Art Festival in 1982.

Sabanita uses aspen and cedar wood, both locally obtained, and carves these after they are dried using simple tools. They sell from their house in Cordova, a room full of small to large santos and other carvings. These are not painted but left in the natural wood and finished with some sanding. I found these stark but immensely attractive. They are based on early santos carvings but are slightly more 'abstracted', or simplified, with a certain style or look predominating.

I also interviewed (on another day at Tesuque village), the famous woodcarver, Ben Ortega. Born in 1923, Ben, who traces his ancestry back to the colonising Spaniards, apprenticed as a cabinetmaker and machine toolist. However, after the war, he happened to carve two small santos which he gave to the Sante Fe Opera for an auction to raise funds. These sold quickly and resulted in orders from a number of people. Now, Ben has been carving these figures for some 40 years! He especially loves his St Francis figures which dominate his work. Indeed, when I walked into his courtyard and saw the hundreds of figures, St Francis and many angel carvings, some lifesized others 7-9 inches. Inside his display room, hundreds more carvings were on display. Again, these are not painted, although some examples of his son's work were. I examined these and wondered, did they still evoke the spiritual essence for which they were made. When one sees such a large quantity of something that is handmade, the 'over production' could lead to a loss of their 'authenticity'. Ben gathers twisted roots of cedar, cottonwood and aspen. He examines these pieces to pick out the form they will take. His angles often have a curved body which is carved along the natural twist in the wood.

Departing from woodcarving and weaving, I also sought out and found Mr Robert and Mrs Emilio Romero, traditional Hispanic tinworkers whom I interviewed. I saw them in their home-workshop, and watched Mr Romero cut, emboss and punch tin sheets, making beautiful folk art works such as mirror and picture frames, candle holderas, chandeliers, boxes and other works. The Romero family has been active tinworkers for five generations, beginning with Felipe Garcia, great-great-grandfather of Senaida Romero who was a Spanish colonist tin maker from the 1840s. The shiny tin was known then as 'poor man's metal', and became a medium for household objects, and to decorate churches and hold religious items and images. Mr Robert and Mrs Emilio Romero won the National Endowment for the Arts and Fellowship in 1987 for their tinwork. Like most traditional Hispanic artisans, Robert is proud of his work and its historic and cultural links. He has been working for some 30 years in the medium. It is also his main source of income. 'My father helped me with my work but you can't just copy you have to change'. A detail work includes the Spanish Hapsburg Double eagle which he wrought in tin after seeing a photograph. Although a machine is used for cutting the work is hand-intensive; he uses tools he inherited from his father as well as those he made himself. Much of the work is made to contain religious images: nichos and frames. Most of his work, if not commissioned, is sold through the Spanish Market, held once a year in Sante Fe.

The Spanish Market is the premier exhibition of traditional Hispanic arts and is sponsored by the Spanish Colonial Arts Society who foster the cultural heritage of Hispanic New Mexico. I viewed their collection of some 2500 pieces of Spanish colonial arts which is stored and exhibited in the Museum of International Folk Art. The Spanish Colonial Arts Society has done much to revitalise traditional Hispanic folk arts in America, acting as a key resource in public education and promotion of traditional Hispanic folk arts design and techniques. Folk artwork they support includes Santos; textiles, furniture, straw applique, colcha, ironwork, jeweland relief carving.

CONCLUSIONS

Folk art is a vital cultural resource within the life of any community where its expression is permitted and encouraged.

As I have discovered, the contemporary study of folk art is not as straightforward as the subject may at first suggest; folk art is a complex, and at times, contradictory field because of its focus on the nature of art which emerges from specific community contexts. Because folk art inquiry covers the shifting relationships between area of art, creativity and culture, it is valuable not only for its expression of individuality within community context, but also for the insight it may give on the nature of creativity in our culture, and hence, its potential to contribute and enrich our understanding of ourselves and our contemporary society.

Any inquiry into folk art therefore first necessitates a definition of the term 'Folk art'. From my Fellowship I define this as deriving from a social and cultural perspective to refer to creative visual art practices which spring from the contexts of history, community, personality, and identity.

Specifically, for the purposes of clarification, my Fellowship investigations may be divided into the following approaches:

1. Research into Southern Folk Art Traditions (Georgia, South and North Carolina), which gave insight into European and African-American pottery, basket-weaving and wood-carving folk crafts.
2. Research into Anglo-Germanic Folk Art traditions as introduced into the east coast settlements from the mid-17th century in New York, Old Salem, and Philadelphia.
3. Research into Hispanic Folk Art traditions as introduced into the South-West from the early 17th century.
4. Research into native American-Indian Folk Art traditions as they were a part of the South-West for over two thousand years.
5. Research into the fusion or amalgamation of Anglo, Hispanic and native American Indian Folk Art traditions as they have emerged over the past 390 years in the South West US.

In America, therefore, folk art emerges from four streams: that based on decorative and technical traditions transplanted by European migrants; that based on endemic native American Indian traditions and techniques; that based on African traditions implanted through early slave migrations; and that which emerges as an amalgamation of various combinations of the previous three.

My investigations resulted in the absorption of an enormous number of images of works in various collections; of listening to and questioning over 25 artists; and of listening to and questioning over 30 academics and experts in Folk Art. This input has changed my previously held perceptions of folk art, its breadth, meaning and variety of expressions.

As a result, I feel that I can now approach the study and writing of a comprehensive book on Australia Folk Art with confidence. Perhaps the most important lesson learnt is the necessity to remain open to the possibilities and richness of expression of folk art. There is little doubt that the most succinct definition, one which embraces the work I observed and which comfortably accommodates its breadth may be articulated as:

Folk art is an everyday art. It fulfills the utilitarian, spiritual, and aesthetic needs of ordinary people. Folk art helps to shape, signal and sustain the cultural values of a given community.

In the US, the folk arts are expressed by indigenous North American Indian people, and by European migrants, and by African-Americans. These groups have vital folk art traditions which are utilised to define identity; express ethnic roots; express an inner individual need; and to affirm community identity or needs.

Other characteristics which identify folk art are:

The term folk art has even been likened to a circus tent under which a variety of 'acts' are simultaneously taking place. Ultimately, folk art is an expression of the common people and not of a small cultural or elite group.

Most folk art emerges from craft traditions, to which is added that personal something (aesthetic qualities) of the craftsman who is an artist by nature (inner drive), if not by training.

Folk art is an adaptive mechanism by which ordinary people may deal with creativity and change. The latter may be the kind of change necessary to adapt to a new country, or else it may be a change necessary to adapt to some personal trauma.

Folk art can express the dynamic relationship between core values, changing historical circumstances, encounters with other cultures and a new environment.

The folk artist is an individual anxious to create an art form reflecting him or herself and his uniqueness, and to understand that uniqueness.

Folk art may be approached through historical and/or scientific methods, or else it may be approached through our emotional responses to it.

The folk artist is an individual who sees the world in a different way.

The folk artist aims to make beautiful objects, to do his or her 'best'.

While the audience pulls the folk artist towards convention, the modern artist is drawn towards innovation.

The 19th century folk vision sees folk art as the product of rural isolation; the 20th century folk artist develops a pictorial language to deal with the urban scene.

Today, folk artists are to be found in every occupational group, and from any of a limitless number of ethnic groups.

The concept of community is not of a static social group but of one which exists in a fluid state.

Folk art is inseparable from everyday life, religion, land, and even, politics.

Folk art may be encouraged by the establishment of markets or fairs, but attempts at undue interference in any folk artist's work usually results in a debasement of the vitality of the art and diminishment of its original integral meaning.

Traditional folk arts and crafts may not only act as a source of pride and self-esteem, but can be a source for the revitalisation of contemporary art expressions.

Other conclusions:

1. Various visual art practices that do not currently fall comfortably within either the contemporary craft or fine arts rubric, especially 'outsider' and 'primitive' art, are also often grouped with folk art.

2. Folk art is more often than not traditional art - as it is modified, adapted and expressed today in the contemporary setting - and particularly how it reflects the origins, continuity of culture and identities of the myriad migrant ethnic peoples that make up any society. In the USA these include: Northern European, Mediterranean, African, Asian, generational American and other groups.

3. In the USA, folk arts are expressed by indigenous North American Indian people in their traditional homelands, and especially as a contemporary, hybridised expression influenced by urban society and contemporary visual arts practices.

4. Folk art (creativity and its practices) is an important source of inspiration and form of expression in the contemporary professional crafts.

**DISSEMINATING IDEAS AND EXPERIENCE
GAINED FROM CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP**

In order to execute my original aim, to produce a major book on Australian folk art, I have sketched out a program of research and writing which would extend over two years.

My ongoing project which follows my Churchill Fellowship, aims to address the marginalisation of folk art in Australia by examining individual folk creativity in all media (such as carving, ceramics, metalwork, textiles), including painting. I will examine folk art practices and works within

the context of specific communities and sub-cultural, ethnic, urban and suburban groups and individuals from around the country.

The project will view folk art as the outcome of craft traditions, individual creativity, and social or community order. Folk art works are therefore interpreted as socially-constituted meaning and identity, and as an area of practice which warrants research, documentation and critical examination.

The project objectives will therefore include:

a comprehensive documentation, for the first time, of the full gamut of contemporary folk art expression in Australia (historic work will provide a summarised context): research of the broad field of contemporary 'folk art' expressions as defined above. Field research observations and writing will specifically order the material into a form which highlights the defining traits and stylistic qualities of creative folk visual art practices.

Documentation of the research into various forms from field notes, photographs, taped interviews. Write essays and publish articles of the work which present, analyze, interpret and discuss the diversity of, as well as aesthetic and cultural aspects of contemporary visual arts and crafts, folk creativity and cultural practices as they express modern Australian life in the urban areas and in the country.

Produce a manuscript to be published as a book '**Australian Folk Art: Traditional, Outsider and Contemporary Creativity**'.

Objectives of this text: to expose and contextualise a broad cross-section (though focussed) of Australian visual arts practitioner's work on a national and international basis; enhance and substantiate the identity of Australian folk practitioners and their communities. Reveal the richness of endemic and ethnic tradition, innovation and the diverse nature of creativity in the arts. Provide a valuable and comprehensive resource on visual arts creativity - both its aesthetic, socio-cultural and its human facets, and as a comparative benchmark and inspiration for ongoing work in the professional and popular crafts and arts.

Priority will be given to a writing and presentation approach which makes folk art accessible and comprehensible to a wide audience, as well as specialist groups, hence promoting its cultural, community and economic values.

Since my completion of a series of text books on the crafts in Australia (see Web site www.ozemail.com.au/~zenn) , my research direction has gradually led me to extend my work into the study of folk art or creativity in a broader sense to cover its present-day contemporary expressions and their relationship and influence on the contemporary crafts. This project will therefore permit me to **apply my understanding, findings and theoretical knowledge to investigate Australian folk creativity**, and hence, bring together my past fifteen years or so experience into one major work.

Promotion. The book, the first to cover the area in Australia, will be marketed nationally and internationally. The subject of folk art has a high profile in the USA especially and the publishers have distributors who will market the book there.

I will also be giving a number of talks raising the subject of the fellowship work to various groups around the country.

In this manner my Churchill Fellowship work which forms the basis of the Australian book will receive wide coverage.

POSTSCRIPT (4 MAY 2002)

Following the completion of the manuscript at the end of 2001, together with extensive photo-documentation, the book was submitted to various publishing houses. Although very well received, the large number of critical illustrations led to anticipated high cost of publication. The manuscript is yet to be published. My ongoing work in various organization led to the project being put aside, though currently it is anticipated that it will be published

either online or in hard copy as a major illustrated book titled:

‘Vernacular Visions: Art of the Australian Peoples a history of folk creativity’

Vernacular Visions-Art of the Australian Peoples tells the story of everyday—that is, folk art—in Australia. Combining ethnology, material culture studies, folkloristics and art history, it ranges widely across media, time and country exploring the origins and character of Australia’s diverse visual traditions. From the rich traditional arts of Australia’s indigenous people, to those which emerged from our colonial history and migrant experience—bush mythology, love of sport, larrikin character, ‘fair go’ national values, and ‘making do’ resourcefulness—the author highlights the animating themes that determine the multicultural character of Australian folk art—in paint, clay, wood, fabric and stone, from archetypal through to contemporary imagery.

Topic summary: Describe in two or three sentences for a non-specialist person (such as a bookshop employee) why this topic is of considerable market interest and why bookshops will sell lots of copies.

- It’s coverage of Aboriginal traditional art, colonial art and art and craft as a social and cultural history with artist biographies (past and present), would attract a variety of interest groups (scholars, educators, curators, art students) as well as a general readership.
- The diverse and often startling imagery, assembled for the first time, will present a remarkable book with broad appeal. It ranges from naïve paintings to carved emu-eggs, from scrimshaw to stone carvings, from ‘Big Things’ to chain-sawed sculptures of the bushranger Ned Kelly, from early convict craft to migrant sculptures, from tin scares to eccentric gardens, from indigenous rock paintings to contemporary graffiti murals, and from slab-and-stick chairs to community quilts, to name some categories.
- The evocative illustrations tell of migration, ethnicity, multiculturalism, tradition, conflict and celebration, ceremony and ritual, beliefs and spirituality, and personal and collective identity—all issues of enduring topicality.
-

- The text has an 'epic' sweep covering over 40,000 years in Australia, from indigenous art to colonialism, the Centenary of Federation and the present.

CONTACT DETAILS:

Dr NORIS IOANNOU

**Po Box 1215 Collingwood, Melbourne,
Victoria**

Email: noris.ioannou@internode.on.net