Scissor Dance: The *Danzaq* of Southern Peru in New York

Stephen Alcorn on Drawing by Hand in a Digital Age

Craft Revisited: A Consumer Revolution

*In Memoriam*: Hilt Kelly, Catskills Fiddler and Caller
From the Director

In the past few weeks, I have been strongly reminded of the value of traditional arts and culture and their importance to the fabric of our everyday life. As executive director of the New York Folklore Society, I consider traditional arts and culture to be an important aspect of one’s sense of self, and a source of pride for a community. It seems to me, without question, that one’s knowledge of one’s own heritage provides grounding, which is essential for the development of a whole person. In making the argument for the importance of traditional arts, I frequently like to point to the importance of culture and the arts for personal and community development. However, in the last two days, two illustrations of the generational aspect of culture and the arts, and their importance to individual and community economies, came strikingly into view.

The first illustration came about as the result of my attending a celebration of the life of the late Yacub Addy, a traditional Ghanaian drummer whose obituary appeared in Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore, Fall–Winter 2014. Honored by the National Endowment for the Arts as a National Heritage Fellow, Yacub Addy died in December 2014, at the age of 83. On May 30, 2015, there was a private celebration on the campus of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, organized by Yacub’s wife Amina Addy and other members of his family. While this was a wonderful event due to the outpouring of love and admiration expressed and the celebratory nature of honoring Yacub, I was also struck by the important economic role that Yacub Addy had played in the lives of his family and band members. As the family patriarch, Yacub Addy was the senior “tradition bearer” of a family legacy of the renowned Addy family of drummers, singers, and dancers from the Avenor neighborhood in Accra, Ghana. This role as the elder statesman of the tradition of drumming by the Ga people held great cultural importance. However, it was also important from an economic viewpoint. Throughout the decades of his involvement with Ghanaian drumming, (from before the independence of Ghana in 1957 to the present), Yacub Addy involved at least 62 band members in his ensemble, many of whom followed him to the United States and became citizens and permanent US residents. As present and former members of Yacub Addy’s ensembles were introduced at the celebration, as part of honoring of his life, the numbers on stage grew and grew—not only with musicians but also with their spouses, children, grandchildren, and other members of their extended families. As their ranks ballooned, it was a poignant recognition of the incredible role of traditional arts in the founding and maintenance of community.

The second, less dramatic illustration followed a few days later on June 2, when I attended a Refugee Art Exhibit, organized by the English as a Second Language (ESL) program of the Albany City Schools and the Refugee Roundtable of Albany, NY—a group of volunteers who work with newcomers to the Albany area. Hosted by the Honorable Kathy Sheehan, Mayor of Albany, at Albany City Hall, the exhibition showcased artistic productions of children within the Albany City School’s ESL classes. It was also an opportunity to recognize the work of adult

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From the Editor

An explosion of pollen sent us to the hospital one May morning. A seemingly extraordinarily long winter ended suddenly with 80-degree temperatures and soaking showers! Spring flowers responded immediately, enthusiastically casting pollen into the air, covering porches and cars in a fine yellow dust. Heaven for those awaiting spring. Hell for those suffering from allergies and asthma.

Many years ago, my wife’s difficulties were with all those cherry blossoms, azaleas, and other warm weather exotics in Washington, DC. “Up North,” we wait for winter’s end as crocuses and daffodils, more often than not, poke up through snow.

That morning the fruit trees, suddenly in bloom, were quite a sight, but the small flowers of oaks and maples especially caught my attention. “Tree flowers?” You remember the acorns you used in fights as a kid, and maple seeds you’d break in half, peel open, and stick to your nose—the fruits of these small flowers. Millions of blossoms softened the once bare trees on distant hills. Poor Nancy, her eyes almost swollen shut, could not appreciate the view.

Flowers of my childhood in the mid-Hudson Valley included forsythia, its golden flowers bursting forth before its new leaves opened. It grew like a weed in our yard, generating a new bush wherever a weeping branch touched the ground. Shadbloom, or serviceberry, another early bloomer, was said to mark “the shad run”—the migratory fish swimming up the Hudson to spawn. I often picked daisies, buttercups, black-eyed

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“I never believed that spring had really come until I saw the first dandelion in bloom”
—Stalking the Wild Asparagus, by Euell Gibbons (1962)
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From the Editor (continued)

Susans, and other wildflowers for bouquets for my mother.

An elderly neighbor gave my dad a variety of young lilac plants with blossoms of purple, white, and a deep French blue, that grew to become a hedge alongside the yard. What a sweet, heavenly scent! The still young lilac bushes offered only few blossoms, though, so we kids had to find others for my mother.

Sunday School, we'd walk the mile home and pick dandelions to proudly carry home, where we filled large vases for our grand bouquets.

These days, vases of lilacs are not good for my wife's allergies. We find common interest in another flower of early May. Just when yards and fields begin to green, in some places vast swaths of gold overtake the green. The dandelions have bloomed! Opening for only a week or so, this humble flower provides for our springtime ritual—dandelion wine-making.

Nancy's dad made dandelion wine north of Syracuse years ago, and when we first moved back to the upper Hudson Valley, a neighbor served us some at a dinner party. A local wine-making store sponsors an annual contest. Still, it's not a common activity.

Farm fields with acres of flowers are the best picking. Early in my wine-making career, I received permission to pick flowers from the matriarch of a farm. While I was filling my bucket, her angry son confronted me, a perceived trespasser: "Just what do you think you're doing?" I humbly replied, "Picking dandelions, sir." We became fast friends, though he refused my offer of a bottle of the future product. Now each spring Nancy and I receive hearty waves and smiles from passing vehicles.

Patience is necessary. Some say to gather the entire yellow blossom head; others say use only the yellow petals pulled out of the green calyx. I cut most of the green base away as I pick, agreeing with some that a bit of green adds to the final product. It also fills the bucket faster. Sliced oranges, lemons, and fresh ginger go into the dandelion flower tea that steeps for five days, covered with a cloth to keep bugs out. My daughter laughs at childhood memories of Dad's stinky concoctions in buckets in the kitchen. Nowadays, she and her college friends enjoy the wine.

The dandelion tea is then strained, the liquid boiled with 10–15 pounds of sugar, depending on whether dry or sweeter wine is desired. When cooled, yeast is added to start the conversion of much of the sugar to alcohol. For one of my first batches, I used Euell Gibbons' recipe in Stalking the Wild Asparagus that called for cake yeast spread on toast to be floated on the tea. Now I use champagne yeast, but not the additives some winemakers use to kill wild yeast, stabilize the wine, and hurry the process. The golden liquid is then siphoned into a 5-gallon glass carboy with an airlock for an oxygen-free environment that allows the fermentation gases to escape.

More patience. Leave it alone in the cool dark of my stone cellar. Transfer to another carboy to help clarify the wine. Transfer again into cleaned, recycled wine bottles. Seal with new corks. By fall, this cottage wine is drinkable, but far better if aged longer, even a few years.

An hour of driving, another hour or so in the ER that May morning. The swelling subsided. Heart rate was normal. The pollen count this spring was off the charts, the doctor agreed. All too soon the snow will return, and a glass of dandelion wine by the fire will remind us that spring will also come again. We hope that perhaps the flowers will bloom with less exuberance next year. Meanwhile, let's have another glass of dandelion wine.

Todd DeGarmo
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The scissors dance of Southern Peru, which was inscribed in 2010 on the UNESCO Representative List of the Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity, is rooted in a distinct local culture and yet has evolved into a transnational practice (UNESCO 2010). Widely regarded as a manifestation of pre-Columbian Andean culture, the dance has survived colonialism, religious persecution, Peruvian nationhood, and migration. Based in a practice of ritual competition within the fiesta patronal system of Andean cultural sponsorship in the south central Peruvian Chankas region, dancers evoke spiritual forces and bring communities together around a common ancestral identity. This article discusses, from the perspective of transnational cultural studies of performance-based symbolism, the practice of New York-based dancers, who learned the tradition in urban migrant communities in Lima and have practiced the dance there, as well as in the rural settings of their origin and now abroad in the US.

Walter Velille and Luis Aguilar are Peruvian scissors dancers who live and practice in the United States. For almost a decade, they have lived in White Plains and Port Chester, NY—towns with large Peruvian populations—and perform at festivals and community events for the Peruvian and general audiences in the New York metropolitan area and before wider audiences across the US. The scissors dance is a hybrid folk tradition that has roots in a 16th-century movement of indigenous resistance to Spanish colonialism. The dance embodies Andean cosmology and spirituality, but in its outward forms of costume, performance practice, and setting, draws from many Spanish influences as well. Known as danzaq in the Quechua language, the dancers are mainly descended from a hereditary caste of professional performers who traditionally competed during summer festivals in South central Peru, as well as in rural-to-urban migrant communities in the capital city of Lima. Dressed in carnival-inspired costumes, the danzaq take turns performing sequences of acrobatic dances to the accompaniment of duets of violins and Andean folk harps. The performance, which has evolved to appeal to urban and global audiences as an exotic spectacle, traditionally served a higher spiritual purpose of restoring, through the dance ritual, the order and balance between the human and natural worlds.

I first met Walter and Luis in the course of fieldwork for a folk arts project at the Westchester Arts Council, for which I produced five events. They performed in these productions between 2008 and 2014. In the spring of 2014, I interviewed them to explore the subject of their experiences of bringing this dance to the US. I was interested not only in their experience of maintaining their practice of this tradition and their physical condition to be able to perform it, but also their experience of recognizing the significance of the practice to audiences in new contexts. Although both dancers had some involvement with cultural institutions in international contexts, their practice in the US was mainly community-based until 2012, when they were invited to join the roster of the National Council of Traditional Arts. Since then, they performed at the American Folk Festivals in Maine and Virginia in 2013 and in Montana in 2014. Thus, they have assumed a role that touches upon what theater and dance ethnographer Jason Bush has described as “commodified objects of multicultural spectacle…of indigeneity” (Bush 2013, 124). Despite this characterization, I found in them a compelling sense of devotion and integrity, as they have followed a trajectory from ancestral Peruvian roots in Lima, through the Peruvian community in New York, to festival stages around the US.

On the Origins of the Dance

Walter and Luis perform under the title Los Chankas del Peru, named after the...
Chankas ethnic group that have inhabited, since before the Inca Empire, the south central area of Peru between the modern capital of Lima and Cusco, including the departments of Huancavelica, Ayacucho and Apurimac. The danzaq are said to serve as a ritual bridge between the upper, middle, and lower spiritual forces, embodied in the mountains, wild animals, human agrarian areas, and underworld realms. Their dance is thought to restore order and balance to the world—an order often symbolized by the flow of water (see Nunez Rebaza [1990] and Strong [2013]). The spirits of the earth are called hua’cas and include Pachamama, also known as Pachamama or ‘Mother Earth,’ and other spirits embodied in the natural environment. This ritual function of the dance has been traced to the beginning of the colonial period, as a response to the catastrophic disruption of indigenous society and of the natural order itself.

Following the conquest, Andean peoples were forced to convert to Christianity and made to work in gold and silver mines in a colonial slave labor system that disrupted native agrarian economic and social structures. Following centuries of exploitation, the prevailing view in colonial and post-colonial Peru was of a society bound by a race- and language-based class hierarchy that left little room for alternative narratives. Native Andeans were relegated to the bottom rung of society and thought to have had no valid culture of their own, nor a literature or religion of significance to the post-colonial Peruvian state.

For centuries, the primary historical record of native resistance, other than the better-known 30-year Incan rebel movement, appeared in the writings of Spanish priest Cristóbal de Molina (1494–1580). Molina had learned the Quechua language and preached in it during the mid-16th century. In 1574, he wrote Relación de las fábulas y ritas de los incas, a treatise on Andean beliefs, cataloging indigenous spirits and religious practices. At the end of this work, he describes “the apostasy of 1565,” a movement in the region east of Cuzco, and noted that a dance called “Taqui hongo,” that was practiced by members of this resistance movement (Molina [1574] 2010). This dance is more commonly known as Taki Unquy, which in Quechua translates to “dance of sickness.” Like the Ghost Dance of the 19th-century Native Americans on the Great Plains, it may have involved a form of trance to counter the trauma of conquest (Strong 2013). The sickness of the dance may also have referred to the epidemics of smallpox, measles, and influenza that raged through the Americas during the conquest.

In 1964, Peruvian historian Luis Millones discovered corroborating historical evidence of this movement in the Spanish colonial archives in Seville. An account written by 16th-century cleric Cristóbal de Albornoz, the deputy of the Bishop of Cuzco and a contemporary of Molina, described his efforts to suppress the Andean resistance. According to Albornoz, the resistance movement began in Ayacucho and quickly spread throughout the Chankas Region, into Cuzco and even to La Paz, Bolivia. He further recorded that the movement was led by shamans, including a noted leader, Juan Choque, who was said to have traveled among the people and proclaimed that the hua’cas, associated with places of indigenous worship destroyed by the Spanish, were still alive and that they had returned not to the land itself, but directly into the hearts and souls of the people—in order to encourage them to reject the language, clothing, religion, and culture of the Spanish and to
reclaim the traditional agricultural activities and spiritual practices that would return them to a state of harmony with nature.

By 1574, this resistance movement had been fully suppressed. However, throughout the colonial period, through independence from Spain in 1821, and into the 20th century, native traditions persisted, despite daunting odds, and evolved into newer forms of expression. As a part of this persistence, the scissors dance developed as an amalgam of native and Spanish folk practices. As the position of the Catholic Church had always been to reject rituals and customs that did not align with Church doctrine, the scissors dance was widely considered to be evidence of diabolical intervention through which the dancers acquired their unusual and considerable acrobatic skills. Over time, the dance came to be tolerated and was often permitted, but only during festivals honoring Catholic saints and in sanctioned spaces, such as the plazas in front of churches. This syncretism allowed for the practice and development of this dance and its associated belief system through the 19th century and into its present form.

Millones’ research and revelations ignited a lively debate among scholars (see, for example, Milones [1964]; Núñez-Rebaza, [1990]; Castro-Klarén [1989]; Turino [1995]; Mumford [1998]; Bush [2013]). The discovery of firm evidence of indigenous cultural resistance in the historical record shifted the interpretation of native culture, history, and regional folklore practices, including the scissors dance itself. This reappraisal of indigenous history is reflected in the rise of political movements that have evoked indigenous identities. However, the strongest resistance movement in the 1980s and early ’90s, the Maoist Shining Path, rejected indigenous culture and through violence, spurred migration to the capital, leaving many communities depopulated. With the accelerated rural-to-urban migration, the scissors dance was also urbanized. Since the defeat of the Shining Path, there has been an active effort to preserve the scissors dance tradition through the revival of local festivals, as well as a campaign to promote this and other ostensibly indigenous cultural practices (Bush 2013). In 2010, after a five-year campaign of advocacy by the Asociación de Danzantes de Tijeras y Musicos del Peru and the Asociación Folklorica de Danzantes de Tijeras y Musicos de Huancavelica, and with the help of the National Institute of Culture in Peru, the scissors dance was inscribed in the UNESCO list of practices of the World’s Intangible Cultural Heritage.

Elements of the Modern Danzaq Practice

The scissors dance is a blend of movement and music, in which the pace, phrasing, and cadences are set by an improvised consensus of the musicians and dancers. Although the indigenous musical instruments of the Andes were mainly flutes and percussion instruments, in current practice, the violin and harp are used exclusively to accompany the scissors dance. The Spanish introduced these instruments, but in the danzaq practice, the musicians claimed these for their own purposes. The harp has been modified to allow it to be played with its tune arc on top in the traditional way, or inverted and carried with strap during processions. The violin is the signature melody instrument, whose
melodies and accents signal and respond to the dancers’ movements. The dancers’ own musical medium, through which they interact rhythmically with the violin and harp, is the percussive sound of two halves of detachable scissors blades struck together in a jingling, castanets fashion, to keep time with other instruments and to influence the phrasing and pauses in the flow of the performance. The sound of the scissors blades are thought to evoke the sounds of rushing water and support the danzaq ritual function of bringing harmony and life to the land (Strong 2012). According to both Walter and Luis, the original instruments to play this role were very hard stones, or “castinelas,” that rang when struck together. They agreed that the roots of their dance practice preceded the conquest. Walter recounted a legend repeated among the danzaq that the first dancers of the Taki Unquy used two steel swords as percussion instruments, in order to symbolize the taming of their original deadly purpose. As steel scissors, along with other European tools, were introduced to the Andes, they were adopted by the dancers, as the looped handles stayed securely in the right hands of the dancer during acrobatic flips and turns. During performance, the dancer keeps a steady beat to the music of the violin and harp, regardless of what he is doing in the dance, while the rhythm of the scissors and dance steps are carefully coordinated. Among some contemporary danzaq in Peru, there is a trend to using bigger and heavier ‘scissors,’ perhaps to evoke the swords mentioned in the interviews (Walter Velille, personal communication).

The Costumes

The costumes of the dancers are characterized by colorful embroidery and patchwork. Walter said that contemporary costumes were modeled on clothing worn by itinerant clowns of the 19th century, figures whose presence was sanctioned by the colonial and Catholic authorities. The key elements are loose-fitting tops, calf-length trousers, and athletic sneakers, which allow freedom of movement.

Contemporary costumes bear lettering corresponding with the hua’cas (nature spirits). Topping all this are large, inverted conical hats, or monteras, a term derived from Spanish bullfighters’ caps, but which is used to describe a wide variety of hats for both men and women in Peru. The danzaq monteras are often made of rainbow bands of color (an indigenous symbol in southern Peru and Bolivia), with streamers hangings off the sides and fringes across the brow. These fringes partly obscure the dancer’s human identity, while the symbols on the dancer’s costume accentuate his spiritual identity.

Some dancers make their own costumes, while specialists have emerged who supply costumes for purchase by dancers, or for them by sponsors. Each dancer may have three or four costumes—he uses the best one on the first day of a festival, for the processions and introductory sections. By the second day during the competition, he brings out the older more worn costumes, as the increasingly acrobatic feats take their toll on the material.
Performance Practice

The scissors dance is performed in towns and villages throughout the Chankas region during the dry season, May to August. Each town takes its turn hosting competitions, known as atipanakuy. A local sponsor is chosen, or steps up to the obligation of hosting the festival, providing food and drink for the dancers and the wider community. This honorific sponsorship follows the pattern found in many mountain communities of Fiestas patronales. In the spirit of competition, towns and sponsors also compete to see who can put on the most lavish festival, with the best food and drink and the best performers. The danzaq travel to the villages in teams of cuadrillas, with at least two dancers and accompanying musicians, to compete over the course of a week—dancing through the night and into the following morning, with as little as an hour of rest between sessions.

The opening events often coincide with the Fiesta de las Cruces, which takes place on May 3. In some regions, the dance is performed on the saint's day of San Isidro Labrador, the patron saint of farmers and laborers—an important figure because of his associations with the agricultural cycle and to the class of workers represented in the dance. During the opening ceremony, either the sponsor of the festival or a political figure honors the saint, gives thanks for the blessing of the elements of Mother Earth, the sun, water, wind, and fire, and introduces the dancers to open the festival. Following this, the cuadrillas lead a procession through the towns to the plazas where the real competitions occur. During the ensuing days, the dancers and musicians perform a sequence of artful and increasingly difficult dances, culminating in daring and often
dangerous tests of courage and skill (Walter Velille, personal communication).

One member of Los Chankas is a veteran of this experience. Luis Aguilar was born in Sucre, Ayacucho. His grandfather was a scissors dancer before him, but when his parents moved to Lima, while he was still a child, they discouraged him from learning the scissors dance. Nevertheless, he was drawn to the practice that he saw in Lima, and began studying at the age of 14, under the guidance of one of his grandfather’s protégés—so that in effect, the tradition was passed from his grandfather to him. Luis excelled in the dance and became a top competitor, returning often to Ayacucho to participate in the scissors dance festivals there. In the summer of 1997, he was one of three finalists in the festival and competition in the community of Huacaná in the department of Apurimac, and he is featured in a Peruvian documentary titled Encuentro Ritual: Los Danzaq de Huacaná (Uriarte 1998). The film documents the sequence of the festival, from the preparations to the blessing ceremonies, and through the days of competitive dances that follow.

As Walter outlined in our interview, the dances follow a specific sequence that evolve from slower and more ritual practice to overtly acrobatic and competitive sequences. The opening of the festival begins with a procession into the town, through the main square and to the church. The music and dance are titled Pasacalle, from the Spanish traditional form. Following a blessing of the dancers before a statue of the patron saint, which is brought out for the occasion, the dancers and audience move to the plaza where most of the competition dances will occur. The following is a list of the dances, with brief descriptions as related by Walter and Luis:

- **Quatro Esquinas**—the four corners, representing the four directions of the world. This dance is part of the ritual opening of the festival;
- **Tonada**—a song form, with many variations of melodies used to accompany a light, playful dance;
- **Siruán**—a song that evokes the spirit of the wind, and that originally was played on the taurias flutes before the introduction of stringed instruments to the Andes;
- **Tinjia**—a song evoking drums and sometimes larger brass instruments, in the tradition of the brass banda;
- **Huallpahuayq (Quechua) or Canto de Gallo (Spanish)**—performed in the early hours before dawn, to mimic a rooster crowing, with dance steps to match;
- **Patara**—a toe dance. Each group will try eight to 10 times to do different dances on tiptoes, sometimes while carrying heavy objects or even other people. Walter describes how dancers have danced while carrying the harpist and violinist on their shoulders, or with children from their audience stacked on top of each other;
- **Escobia**—a dance mimicking the sweeping motion of a broom;
- **Alto Ensayo**—when the dancers use high steps and leaps, or on alternate days, the Alba Ensayo—which uses melodies of a sweeter sound;
- **Ante Alba**—a dance which includes the same elements as the Alto Ensayo but is performed at night;
- **Pampa Ensayo**—a dance that is performed from a prone position, often using the back and thigh muscles to propel the dancer across the dance floor or plaza;
- **La Prueba del valor**—a dance exhibiting feats of strength or agility. “The trial of courage—you need free hands to do what you want and might not use scissors for this dance”—Walter Velille;
- **Yauar Mayo** (in Quechua, “a river of blood”) or **Agonia** (in Spanish)—dances that involve feats of endurance, especially to pain, including sword or knife swallowing, piercing of flesh and the suspension of large stones or other weights, or walking on coals. There is no specific musical accompaniment to this part, other than sometimes the making of crying sounds on the violin. Usually performed in the early evening; and
- **La Campana (the bell)**—A final dance which has become more popular in recent years, in which dancers descend cable or rope stretched from the tops of bell towers to the far side of the plaza, below where the ends are held by large groups of men. According to Walter, many dancers have died in falls during this ‘dance’.

(Walter Velille and Luis Aguilar, personal communication).

### The Scissors Dance in Transnational Context

While it continues to be practiced at local festivals in the Chankas region, the Danza de Tijeras has also thrived in migrant communities in Lima, following the rural-to-urban migration of people from the Chankas region to the capital. Like Peruvian communities in the US, the barrios of Lima were settled by smaller communities of migrants from specific regions, who gather for mutual support and among whom local cultural practices are nurtured (Turino 1993). From these internal migrant communities, the dance has traveled to other parts of the world, following migration abroad. The members of Los Chankas del Peru are exemplars of this pattern of migration and the reaffirmation of tradition.

Andean music and dances of the Peruvian, Ecuadorian, and Bolivian communities have been a focus of my fieldwork as folklorist for the Westchester Arts Council. The first scissors dancer I met in 2003 was Isaac Milares, whose sister had founded a community dance group, El Conjunto Revelación in Port Chester. Isaac performed an abbreviated solo version of the scissors dance to recorded music, as a complement to the colorful and playful regional group dances of the larger ensemble. In 2005, Walter arrived in the Port Chester community to share this tradition.

Walter Velille grew up in Lima in the migrant community from the Apurimac department of southern Peru, where the scissors dance originated. His father had also been a scissors dancer, but retired to play violin for other dancers. Walter learned the dances from his father and others in the community. Later, he had the opportunity to teach apprentices at the Museo de la Nación in Lima. Through this recognition, he was
invited to perform in Europe, China, and Japan. He first visited the US in 2002 to participate in a Native American gathering in Seattle, where he began building bridges between his and North American native traditions. He settled in the New York area in 2005, living first in the Sound Shore village of Port Chester, which has a large and thriving Peruvian community, but more recently in North White Plains. He has worked for contactors doing flooring, roofing, and gutter work.

In 2005, Luis immigrated to the US and settled in Port Chester as well, where he works as a house painter. Soon, he joined Walter in forming Los Chankas del Peru. They performed under their stage names of Quesgento and Paccaricha. Scissors dancers are given spiritual names by their mentors when they attain a level of mastery of the dance. In Quechua, Quesgento means “cicada,” and Paccaricha means “daybreak,” or dawn. In 2008, the pair joined with two musicians. Brothers born in Apurimac, Andean harpist

Walter Velille demonstrates Alta Ensayo leap over the sound engineers, Port Chester Fest, June 2013. Photo by the author.
Alejandro Velasco performs as Siguarcha, (the name of a small bird) and violinist Ignacio Velasco uses the stage name Chirapa (meaning “rainbow”).

Rarely seen in the US before the late 1990s, the Danza de Tijeres is becoming more common, especially in areas with larger Peruvian populations. In the New York area there are other dancers, but Los Chankas del Peru, among the best known, perform throughout the region at community festivals, or at events as small as community concerts in church basements, as I have witnessed in Port Chester. In addition, Los Chankas have performed annually at the United Nations Conference on Indigenous Peoples. At most events in the US, performances tend to be short, certainly in comparison to the festivals in the Chankas region. They can be as short as 20 minutes, with an opening duet dance based on the Passacalle procession, typically followed by one continuous melody accompanying, by turns, the two dancers who engage in a friendly and often choreographed exchange of dance sequences, which gradually escalate into acrobatics. At the end, a final duet is performed to close the performance. In the larger festivals, the group will enact a version of the blessing of the elements, using an embroidered blanket with ceremonial objects, and the sounding of a conch shell trumpet for dramatic effect. Even in the expatriate Peruvian community performance settings, the performances are not generally longer, because, as Walter explained, many Peruvians migrants come from other regions of Peru, where few know of the scissors dance tradition.

Conclusion

Across Peru, dance affirms community through participatory practice of a complex language not only of local cultural symbolism, but also of the dramatic interplay of actors representing or commenting upon the social order. Carnival and Fiestas patronales are occasions in which teams of dancers represent their own classes or social groups, or mock others in competitive dance events (See Turino [1992] and Mendoza [2000] for examples in Puno and Cuzco). Unlike the amateur carnival and festival dancers, the danzaq are a professional caste of specialized dancers who, through a process of migration and recontextualization have adapted their practice to embody a deeply historical identity apart from the everyday social fabric—but also one that
has become a transnational symbol of Peruvian indigenous identity. In the migrant communities of Lima, others have learned and practiced the scissors dance, as it has entered the realm of popular national culture. Likewise, where traditionally the danzaq were always men, women are now learning the practice as well.

Within the transnational context of a community such as in Port Chester, NY, the dance also serves an important role in creating a virtual space for the affirmation of the Chankas regional identity and evoking its spiritual associations within migrant communities. As such, the practice of Walter Veille, Luis Aguilar, and the Velasco brothers serves to situate migrants from their home region as a virtual sub-community among Peruvians living abroad, even as they earn at least part of their livelihoods outside the community as a “commodity” of their partially reimagined culture.

References


Notes
1 Ending in 1565 with the execution of its leader, Tupac Amaru, the nephew of the Inca ruler, Atahualpa, who was ransomed and murdered by the conquistador Pizarro and his men 30 years before.

2 French naturalist and travel writer Paul Marcov witnessed scissors dancers in Cusco in the 1860s and his two-volume narrative of his journey across South America included a clear description of a scissors dancer in the modern sense, but one whose role he identified as a clown among many street performers (Marcov [1869] 1873).

3 The text of the nomination of the Scissors Dance is as follows: The scissors dance is performed by inhabitants of Quechua villages and communities in the south-central Andes of Peru, and now in urban settings… during dry months coinciding with the main phases of the agricultural calendar. The scissors dance takes its name from the pair of polished iron rods, resembling scissors blades, wielded by each dancer in his right hand. Together with a violinst and a harpist, a dancer forms a cuadrilla (team) that represents a given village or community. To perform, two or more cuadrillas face each other, and the dancers must strike the blades together in time to the rhythm of the accompanying musicians, while performing a choreographed duel of step-dancing, acrobatics and increasingly demanding movements. The competition or atipuanakay may last up to ten hours, and physical ability, quality of the instruments, and expertise of the accompanying musicians, are all evaluated to determine the winner. The dancers wear outfits embroidered with golden fringes, multi-coloured sequins and small mirrors, but while in costume are forbidden from entering churches because of the tradition that their abilities are the result of a pact with the devil. Regardless, the scissors dance has become a popular part of Catholic festivities. The physical and spiritual knowledge implicit in the dance is passed on orally from master to student, with each cuadrilla of dancers and musicians giving pride to its village of origin. (UNESCO 2010)
Home, Sweet Homewood

BY LIBBY TUCKER

This has been an unusually long and harsh winter. Daylight savings time starts tomorrow, but our neighborhood still looks like Antarctica. Our driveway has a thick layer of ice, and our gutters have cracked under the pressure of enormous icicles. In weather this bad, squirrels don’t want to leave their nests in the frozen trees. Both animals and humans want to stay in their warm, comfortable homes.

Early in February we had a welcome break from winter doldrums. Hugh Grant, a beloved British actor, paid a visit to Binghamton University with Marc Lawrence, a talented BU alumnus who directed his most recent film, The Rewrite. Both of them came to our campus that freezing February day because The Rewrite, a romantic comedy about a reluctant screenwriting professor, had been partially filmed here. Excitement spread rapidly. There would be a screening of the film, with commentary by Grant and Lawrence, and students and faculty could get free tickets!

Many of us were ready to line up, no matter how cold and snowy the weather became. The screening of The Rewrite was a huge success, but it wasn’t easy to get tickets. Like many other people, I watched the movie later on my computer at home. It was a delight to discover that the movie included a ghost story—not just a story about a haunting by one deceased person, but a story about a whole ghostly town that had unexpectedly appeared. This town, Homewood, belonged to The Twilight Zone, created by Binghamton’s favorite author Rod Serling.

The Twilight Zone episode, “Walking Distance” appeared on CBS in 1959. In the episode a middle-aged man named Martin Sloan stops at a gas station to get his car repaired and learns that the town of Homewood, where he grew up, is close enough for a short visit. Feeling nostalgic, Martin strolls over to a park where he spent many happy hours as a boy. With a sense of shock, he realizes that he is not only in the same town where he grew up but also in the era of his boyhood. On the park’s carousel, Martin meets his younger self and frightens the boy, causing him to fall off the moving carousel and injure his leg. Later, Martin talks with his father, who advises him to look forward, not back. As he returns to the gas station to pick up his car, Martin realizes that he now has a limp; his boyhood self’s injury has become his own.

How does the encounter between Martin and his younger self and his father influence the plot of The Rewrite? Serling, a highly respected author who grew up near Recreation Park in Binghamton, has become part of the city’s identity and spirit. Binghamton residents proudly point to the carousel in the park, which stands near a plaque honoring “Walking Distance,” and a local legend claims that Serling’s ghost haunts the carousel. In The Rewrite we hear nothing about Serling’s ghost, but we see the plaque and learn about the episode that it honors. As Keith Michaels, the reluctant screenwriting professor, starts a relationship with an undergraduate female student, drinks too much liquor, provokes the anger of a senior faculty member, and dismisses his class for a month, he gets into so much trouble that he needs good, solid advice, which Serling’s “Walking Distance” provides.

Just as Martin Sloan learns that he must leave Homewood and look forward, not back, Keith Michaels learns that he should stop breaking the university’s rules and plan for a worthwhile future as a creative writing professor. He also gets in touch with his estranged son and buys a Jane Austen tote bag and other trinkets for a senior faculty member who deeply dislikes him, winning her appreciation and friendship. That part of the movie seems very hard to believe, but who expects romantic comedies to imitate reality? Quasi-magical transformation can be fun to watch, especially because it doesn’t happen often in everyday life.

Characters in The Rewrite, “Walking Distance,” and certain local ghost legends express yearning of people to communicate with each other. In ghost legends, communication necessitates breaking through the border between the living and the dead; in novels, plays, and films, characters can move from the present to the past or the future. Neither form of travel is easy.

Some Binghamton legends describe ghosts who struggle to reach their lost loved ones. One famous example is the “White Lady,” a hitchhiker who died on a highway and tries very hard to return to her parents. This is one of many stories from the “Vanishing Hitchhiker” legend cycle. Another Binghamton legend concerns a husband who slowly walks upstairs, bringing wood to warm the room where his dear wife sleeps. He and his wife both belong to the past, but his love for his wife makes him carry wood into the present, disturbing the sleep of the house’s current owners. In both of these stories, loving family bonds provide powerful motivation. Not all Binghamton ghost stories involve positive feelings, however. The ghost of Joshua Whitney at Christ Church, founded in 1810, supposedly haunts the church because he is furious that he never got a chance to build an oversized pew. He communicates with the living by hiding objects and playing outrageous tricks.

During the long, cold months of winter and early spring, we think about connections between the past and the present, and bonds between the living and the dead. Going back to “home, sweet home” might be tempting, but it would be an emotionally complicated trip. Let’s move on to the future and welcome spring!
As a kid, I loved to linger with the dictionary long after the word I wanted to know was found. More often than not, the accidental discoveries were far more interesting than what I was seeking.

So it was when I attempted to piece together a picture of my grandmother by searching for her maiden name online. Many older newspapers have been turned into searchable PDFs; but once on a page, you have to search the old-fashioned way, by reading the page to find the name you’ve entered. That’s how I lost my genealogical path and found instead, the flavor of everyday life more than a century ago in upstate New York.

What was on the minds of Adirondackers in 1906? Through its weekly column “Neighborhood Notes,” The Warrensburgh News gave simple sketches of what mattered:

People coming and going

Wevertown: John Davison went to Indian Lake Saturday. Mrs. J. Davison came home from Indian Lake Saturday.

Indian Lake: Nearly everyone around town is afflicted with severe colds. Mrs. Isaac Kenwell and Mrs. Frank Carroll left Tuesday for a week’s sojourn with friends at Greenfield Center.

Knoblerhurst: There was quite an excitement at L. W. Wood’s store and post office Wednesday of last week when Mike Flynn, a fighter from away back, came in and attempted to run things. He abused three men and then turned upon Seymour Fuller, who knocked him down, blackened both his eyes and choked him almost into insensibility and no one interfered [sic] until Flynn said he had enough. Verdict of the crowd, “Served him right.” Fuller knocked his thumb out of joint, but was not otherwise injured.

Beasts of burden

Minerva: Master Arthur Callahan has disposed of his donkey and the boys are now riding on skees [sic]. Mr. and Mrs. John S. James were at the Westside on business Saturday. Mr. James is driving a very fine colt that he has purchased recently and has the animal very nicely broken.

West Stony Creek: Orrin Perkins while drawing pulp wood to Stony Creek Saturday lamed one of his horses quite badly. The animal stepped on an old skid in the road and turned her ankle in such a way as to cause a severe sprain, which will disable her for some time.

Stony Creek: Halsey Fuller has sold his work horse to Mr. Waddell, of Chester. W. R. Miles has traded his gray road horse—the one he raised, that is, he “raised” it with tackle blocks, had to raise it that way, because the horse, when down, could not or would not get up by itself. It seemed now and then to get discouraged with things of this world and wanted to lie down and quit. Like the late Southern Confederacy the horse simply wanted to be let alone, but unlike said Confederacy the old horse, with the help of the blocks, was put on its feet and made to stand up and take notice. The horse Mr. Miles traded for needs no advertising, as it “blows its own horn.”

Tending to business

Johnsburgh Corners: Wyatt Ellsworth, of Lake George, is in town to buy fat cattle. W. J. Armstrong, who was injured at the Hooper garnet mine, is some better but cannot use his arm any yet. Dr. Somerville removed the bandages Monday and thinks the bones are uniting nicely.

Igerne: Miss Mabelle Cole, of Warrensburgh, is in town securing employees for J. P. Baumann & Son’s shirt waist factory.

Bakers Mills: Ellsworth Ross made seventy-five pounds of maple sugar during the last days of February. It is also reported that Lewis Hack, who lives about a mile from Johnsburgh Corners, made 100 pounds in the same time.

Indian Lake: Mrs. John Lawrence left Thursday for New York, where she will purchase her spring millinery.

Knowelhurst: Warren White has hauled 200 cords of pulp wood from the mountain and will let it lay over until next winter. L. W. Brooks has set some teams hauling 400 cords of bark out of the woods and drawing it to the Stony Creek station on wagons. Quite a job at one load per day.

Stony Creek: L. W. Brooks has given up hope of moving the remainder of his logs and will turn his attention to getting his bark out of the woods to a place where he can get to it with wagons to wheel it to the station.

. . . and pleasure

North Creek: There will be a dance at Dunlap’s hotel, North River, tomorrow evening. Some of our young people will attend.

North River: John Cornwall, a wealthy city man who has a home here, last week purchased an elegant Ivers & Pond baby grand piano from Baffey’s [sic] piano rooms, Glens Falls. The instrument was delivered and set up Friday by George M. Kempton, manager of the Bailey rooms. Mrs. Cornwall, who is a splendid player, is much pleased with it.

Story of the week

Graphite: Mrs. Channcy [sic] Duell had a narrow escape from losing all her hair one night last week. It appears that she had a rubber or other inflammable comb in her hair, and while sitting near the stove she stooped her head over and the comb caught on fire. She screamed and ran to the water bucket continued on page 14
Eventually I located my grandmother’s name (“Miss Ella Van Norden, of New York, is a guest at Woodbine cottage.” Olmstedville, March 8, 1906), but like meandering through the dictionary, the slice of life from all the other Neighborhood Notes was far more fascinating.

Maybe another search is in store. Was this the first time my mother’s mother visited the Adirondacks? Was Woodbine cottage where she met my grandfather? The 1906 date is three years before she gave birth to my mother. Who knows what detours are in store the next time I go exploring.

**High Banter**

**BY STEVE ZEITLIN**

*Whenever my wife* and I do something really dumb or spacey, we call it “Steve and Amanda go around the world in a daze.” Like many, long-married couples, we’ve developed routines for our own personal comedy team of sorts. For instance, Amanda and I take a commuter train home from Grand Central Station. We often arrive at the station separately and promise that we’ll meet at the gate. The other day I got to the gate with only a minute or two before the train left—but she wasn’t there. I called her on my cell.

“You’re not here—where are you?” She answered, “I’m at the gate.”

“Amanda, it’s Gate number 35!”

“I am at Gate 35.”

Suddenly a passerby tapped me on the shoulder and said, “By chance, is that the woman you’re looking for?” We were standing back-to-back, less than five feet apart, and we dissolved into laughter over our unwitting slapstick. Hilarious for an audience of two. Definitely insider humor.

Every couple that has spent years together probably has a comic and straight man embedded in their humor and their folklore. In our comedy routine, I am a fountain of silliness to a bemused Amanda who plays my “straight man.” In every photograph on our vacations, I am trying to pose as a Roman statue on a sheared off colonnade, or make it look like the sun is setting in my glass of caipirinha, while Amanda takes the picture and laughs.

Professional comedy teams themselves are, of course, inspired by real life. Lucille Ball was already a successful comedienne when she was offered a sitcom on CBS. She would only agree to do it if they brought on her husband, Cuban bandleader Desi Arnaz. At the time, her producers thought it was crazy to consider the Cuban bandleader for the show—“what television audience would believe that you were married to a Cuban bandleader?” they asked. “I am married to a Cuban bandleader,” she told them. Commentators talk about her wanting to bring the touring Desi Arnaz closer to home by putting him on the show, but she must have known from real life that they could be funny together, with her playing the comic and Desi, the straight man (Kantor 2009).

The idea of which partner will be the straight and which one the comic can change. The comedy team of George Burns and Gracie Allen, that from the 1930s through the 1960s took comedy from vaudeville to radio and then to television, switched their roles at one point. When they got started in vaudeville in New York, Gracie was the straight woman and George had all the funny lines. At some point, they noticed that audiences were laughing at Gracie’s straight lines, not at George playing the fool. So they switched roles with George playing the straight man, and Allen playing the ditsy lady with all the funny lines.

“For the benefit of those who have never seen me before,” said New York comedian George Burns, “I’m what is known in show business as a straight man. After the comedian gets through with the joke I look at the comedian and then I look at the audience like this” (rolls his eyes). Then Gracie would tell a joke. For instance, George walks into their living room and says,

“Those are beautiful flowers.”

“ Aren’t they lovely?” she answers. “If it weren’t for you I wouldn’t have them.”

“Me? What did I have to do with it?”

“You said when I went to visit Clara Bagley to take her flowers. So when she wasn’t looking, I did.”

George pauses to bring on the laughter.

“That is what is known as a pause,” he said. “I’m famous for my pauses” (Kantor 2009).

In the documentary Make ‘Em Laugh, the actor Lewis Stadlen notes that “George Burns and Gracie Allen captured the idea that men are from Mars and women are from Venus. The idea that two intellectual concepts will never meet, but they still love each other.” (Kantor 2009). Perhaps the humor is what enables them to love each other, as it does with many couples.

Whether between comedians on the pop culture stage or partners in everyday life, high...
banter is all about being in the moment. When you are totally at home with another person, you can free associate, creating riffs that you could never have with anyone else. The online Urban Dictionary, in which visitors supply their own words and definitions of urban slang, offers their “top” definition of banter as a “supple term used to describe activities or chat that is playful, intelligent and original.” Their best example, an old vaudeville line:

“You, sir, are drunk.”

“Maybe so, but you are ugly, and I will be sober in the morning.”

Andy Davis, an L.A.-based scholar and performer who stages burlesque comedy shows based on his doctoral research into theater history, plays the straight man with his friend David Springhorn in sketches they call Doc and Stumpy’s Burlesque Shows. A classic vaudeville line made its way into their own high banter away from the stage—“that joke just never gets new.”

The great comedy teams are reacting and improvising with each other, as well as responding to the audience. Amanda and I are huge fans of Saturday Night Live, which we struggle to stay up to watch every Saturday night. An entire volume could and should be written on the folklore of Saturday Night Live, focusing on the improvisatory humor—the banter shared and created by the writers, as well as the banter improvised by the comics on the live show. One particular favorite was watching comedienne Amy Poehler and Maya Rudolph riff off each other as Betty Caruso and Jodi Dietz on their local TV show, Bronx Beat.

Betty: “Its bananas! The whole world is bananas. You know what I say? Live your life cause the world is gonna blow up?”

Jodi: “She’s right. Enjoy your family, enjoy your friends, have a glass of wine.”


If you’re not in the moment, the world of high banter will slide right past you. High banter is a key ingredient of folk culture and family folklore. It’s also the essence of the poetry duels that Amanda and I have studied in different parts of the world. Both on street corners and stages, poets riff off each other in rhyme, participating in traditions ranging from extempo in Trinidad, desafios in Portugal, antrusti in Italy, freestyle rap in the US, and repentistas in Brazil. The banter between couples and others is also reminiscent of what happens when jazz musicians riff off one another. It’s a key element of comedy as it evolved from local humor to its days on medicine and minstrel show stages, vaudeville and burlesque, sitcoms and reality TV—and back into the living room.

For everyday couples, moments of high banter are often enshrined in story—written about or retold. The balance for any creative person is to be both in the moment—with no notion that the banter might make for a good story—and later realizing that—ahah!—it will make a good story, then shaping and telling the tale to friends or on paper when the time is right.

The Steve-and-Amanda-Go-Around-the-World-in-a-Daze stories are told with great flair by Amanda. In our comedy team, I am the quipper and Amanda is the storyteller, who retells the incident afterwards to an outside audience. Most recently, Amanda attended a the biannual Cousins House Party at the beach in South Carolina, which brings together the women cousins of her generation for a three-day bash of drinking, joking, and telling stories. The humor rests on a lot of insider knowledge. For instance, many of the Dargan/Edwards cousins are known for generations of wide hips. Amanda told the story of our high banter that followed my purchase of a maroon shirt that had an especially large collar.

Amanda: “You shouldn’t wear shirts with big collars.”

Steve: “Why?”

Amanda: “They make your head look small,” she teased.

Steve: “Your hips make my head look small.”

It was her cousin Martha’s story, though, of a riff between herself and a burly, tough guy in a supermarket that took the comedy cake at the House Party, enshrined forever in the Dargan cousins’ folklore. Amanda’s cousin Martha was in the supermarket, when she heard a loudmouth cursing at his companion. Martha shook her head and said, “Mister, what is your problem?”

“My problem?” he shouted. “I don’t have a problem.”

“My problem?” she said, “your problem’s your mouth.”

“Lady,” he retorted, “your problem, your butt.”

So here’s to high banter, the humorous jazz that occurs when we riff off one another, improvising in those you-had-to-be-there moments where the timing is perfect and conversations are elevated to the point where, as Cole Porter put it, “It’s delightful, it’s delicious, it’s de-lovely.”

Works Cited


Steve Zeitlin is the founding director of City Lore in New York City. Photo by Martha Cooper.
For over 2,000 years, the noun “digit” (from the Latin *digitus*) has signified “finger,” but now in its adjectival form “digital” relates to technology that generates, stores, and processes data. This lexical shift is emblematic of a larger change within our culture, and more specifically, the practice of drawing. With a new millennium quickly unfolding before us, I cannot think of a better time to look at the past to reconsider the essential role that tactile values have played in the practice of drawing since time immemorial. Are our hands becoming obsolete as creative tools? Are our hands being replaced by machines? And where does that leave the creative process?

These questions were first raised by my entry into the realm of academe in the fall of 2010, when I became a member of the faculty at Virginia Commonwealth University’s School of the Arts in Richmond, VA. Charged with teaching, among other things, the fundamentals of drawing, I was required to analyze and articulate, in a concise manner, the processes that as a draftsman, I had developed and employed over the years—and which had become mysteriously instinctual and intuitive. This development in my professional life soon led to a renewed interest on my part in the practice of observational drawing. Perhaps inevitably, this led to a rediscovery of the lessons learned while attending the *Istituto Statale d’Arte* in Florence, Italy.

I had the good fortune to come of age in a culture that fostered a holistic,
humanistic approach to art education. A seminal influence for me at this stage of my life was my instructor of *disegno dal vero* (life drawing), the sculptor and painter Marco Lukolic. A kind and thoughtful man, he reveled in the eye-mind-hand coordination that makes drawing possible, and fostered an appreciation for the art of translation, namely those processes of thought and perception that permit an artist to transcend the prosaic and embrace the poetic. His work is at once modern, ancient, sophisticated, and naïf—in short, it lends itself to being appreciated on multiple levels. He valued the organic over the clinical, and the imaginative over the literal. Perhaps most importantly, he taught me to value tradition and to recognize that tradition is not nostalgia, but knowledge passed on from one generation to another. For his example I am grateful, for it encouraged me to see my artistic development as a microcosm of the larger history of art, and thus have a sense of belonging to a larger whole.

**Maintaining a daily diet of drawing**

The challenges I have faced as a printmaker, illustrator, and painter over the years led me to work more and more from...
memory, and in a manner and style perhaps more indebted to the advent of synthetic cubism than to the figure drawing lessons of my youth, which revolved around the discovery and exploration of such extraordinary draftsmen as Pisanello, Watteau, Ingres, the youthful Degas, and Kollwitz. This distancing from the academic drawing practices of my youth was pushed further by my lifelong fascination with the relief-block print, a medium that imposes unforgiving constraints and necessitates a high degree of formal stylization.

Still, I never completely abandoned the practice of drawing from life. Over the years, my work has come to embody a sort of dichotomy comprised of two complementary approaches to image making: one inspired by anonymous Italian folk art of the 15th and 16th centuries, and 18th- and 19th-century American folk art; and a second inspired by the aforementioned European tradition of master draftsmanship. My “Daily Drawing” series of mixed-media studies is a testament to my commitment to the practice of drawing remaining an integral part of my daily life.

A firm foundation

The things that shaped my experience in school—a love for artist’s materials, a hands-on approach to the image-making processes, etc.—no longer apply to the art student of today. The contrast between the inherently artisanal character of my experience in art school and the technology-driven ethos of today could not be more marked. As I seek to impart the skills I was fortunate to learn in my youth, I am made increasingly aware of how removed today’s students have become from the tools, materials, and art historical references that I took for granted—the very things that made my evolution and career as a printmaker, illustrator, and painter possible. I am finding that students often rely on only one medium of communicating and visualizing their ideas, and don’t explore other craft-based media. What has emerged from the predominance of the computer in the generation of art is the
domination of the tool over the aesthetic judgment of the user. The computer is an extremely powerful instrument, and like all tools, it alters our perception of reality. Because of this, one’s consciousness of form, color, shape, and meaning can risk the danger of being eclipsed by increasingly technological extensions of our faculties.

**Striking a balance**

As a 21st-century artist, I rely on the most advanced digital technologies as tools that enhance my ability to be more human. These labor-saving devices grant me time to work by hand. In turn, those hand-made drawings can be scanned with a fidelity unknown to previous generations, and the results can then be disseminated to an increasingly larger audience. The power of the computer lies not in its ability to imitate human actions, but in the facility with which it allows people to communicate fully as human beings. Paradoxically, digital technology enhances my humanity and allows me to keep everything alive—a tradition that began 30,000 years ago with the prehistoric cave painters. Technology...
exists to serve humanity. Humanity does not exist to serve technology. As such, the laptop is a brilliant labor-saving tool. It is not, however, a substitute for life anymore than as Flaubert pointed out, literature can substitute for life. In other words, any escape that takes us out of the realm of the living is a shortcut to the demise of the senses.

One of my tasks each fall is to review the portfolios of prospective incoming students. Over the past four years, I have noticed a curious pattern: with each passing year the amount of handmade imagery presented diminishes, while the amount of digitally manipulated photographs culled from the Internet increases, resulting in a marked depersonalization of the portfolios. Although this does not reflect poorly on the potential of the students, it does reflect the extent to which K–12 art education has abandoned any semblance of a time-tested curriculum. The majority of incoming students do not possess an understanding of the fundamental basics of artist's materials. Without knowledge, for example, of the difference between acrylics and gouache paint, watercolors and oils, cotton and linen canvas, hot press and cold press paper, sable and nylon brushes, can students really hope to render the marks they need to make in order to realize their full potential as aspiring artists? The art instruction establishment has turned its back on the established curriculum, which gave beauty and craft top priority. One of my primary goals as an instructor is to restore the age-old connection between the two.

**Falling prey**

The website for the (George) Lucas Museum of Narrative Art in Chicago proclaims the following:

Current software gives artists tools capable of mimicking almost any medium. With practice, charcoal, oil, airbrush, acrylic, and collage can be replicated. Time-consuming traditional techniques, such as the creation of multiple layers of transparent glazes, can now be accomplished in minutes with no anxiety, no mess and no harmful solvent fumes. This flexible toolbox gives artists the time and the freedom to create unique work for print, games, television, Internet outlets, and feature films.

The affordability of graphic-arts software is one of its greatest virtues, but the digital medium also boasts convenience and practicality. A corner desk can serve as a complete studio, and a computer can substitute for an entire art supply store. Gone are the days of rushing out to buy a tube of cerulean blue. The digital illustrator's color palette is unlimited, his brush collection infinite, and it's all completely portable. ([http://www.lucasmuseum.org/collection/category/digital-illustration-202.html](http://www.lucasmuseum.org/collection/category/digital-illustration-202.html))

This is a disingenuous attempt to sanitize the creative process and to obliterate the cumulative knowledge gained over the course of 30,000 years of mark-making history. It is, in effect, a thinly veiled advertisement, at the expense of students, from an industry intent on dominating a field in order to exploit a gullible, unwitting audience. Pedagogically, students have little to gain by mimicking the effects of any given medium, if first they don't experience the real thing. Equally problematic are the suggestions that the creative process should somehow be “anxiety free,” that there is something wrong with wanting a physical...
grassroots initiative, which revolved around the art of the relief-block print, may also be traced to the Home Industries/Arts and Crafts movements of the 19th century. What is striking about all three “schools” is the organic warmth of the products they spawned, and their commitment to celebrating the ties that bind people to the very environments in which they live and work. All are expressions of the way in which artists, through an assertion of the basic human instinct to create things by hand, have been driven to rebel against the depersonalizing and dehumanizing effects of the machine on the arts, and by extension, on the quality of life. Well over a century after Morris’ noble experiment, humanity confronts another counter-intuitive challenge. Digital technology, and its accompanying automation, has the potential to liberate humanity and to return the hand to its rightful place in our lives. Unfortunately, the same shortcuts have proven so seductive that their users now dream of abandoning their humanity altogether, thus allowing their hands to atrophy, as if they were superfluous appendages. Yet that was never the intent of the founders of Apple or Microsoft.

A similar precedent may be found in the Byrdcliffe Colony, also called the Byrdcliffe Arts Colony. Byrdcliffe, near Woodstock, NY, was created as an experiment in utopian living and was an outgrowth of the aforementioned 19th-century Arts and Crafts movement. To this day, it remains the oldest operating Arts and Crafts colony in America. Then, there was the Gloucester, Massachusetts-based consortium, Folly Cove Designers, which grew out of a design course taught by the celebrated children’s book illustrator and author, Virginia Lee Burton. The genesis of this particular

Paths of least resistance

It is the tactile nature of the relationship between artists, the materials they used, and the surfaces they drew upon that give the history of art its fundamental variety and character. How a tool responds to the relative hardness, coarseness, absorbency, etc., of a given surface is as important to an artist's expression as the artist's response to said tools, and vice versa. However mastering the use of physical media is a difficult challenge. Many mediums are inherently unforgiving and do not permit the endless revisions that digital technologies offer. The opportunity to create innumerable versions of a digital file, without requiring a bona fide commitment on the part of the artist, is an attractive one to students, precisely because it is, in addition to being expedient, forgiving. This flexibility comes with a price, for beneath the buffed, slick surface can lurk a disheartening lack of substance. Students who lean unduly on the inherent flexibility of digital drawing mediums not only surrender the individuality of their mark-making practices, but also the ability to effectively edit their work.

To experience material resistance in one's work is desirable: whether it be in the form of a substance to be cut (as in the case of a relief-block print), the drag of a sable brush on a sheet of cold-pressed paper, or, the challenge of manually mixing one's own pigments. To respond to such resistance is to build strength and character. Without said character Olympic athletes, concert pianists, or master printmakers could not hope to achieve their excellence. Tempting as it may be to abandon the realm of physical media, to do so can only lead to a gradual decline in effectiveness or vigor due to underuse or neglect. Ultimately, we have no choice but to use it or lose it, to borrow a phrase. By leading students to believe that they can, in a matter of minutes, “mimic” virtually any effect they choose, and in so doing, spare themselves the “anxiety” of having to actually learn a given technique, is to encourage them to follow a path of least resistance. The challenges that physical media have to offer are invigorating, precisely because they offer resistance. Does not the power of the genie depend upon the constraints imposed by the proverbial bottle?

No longer can an aspiring artist expect to serve an apprenticeship with an established artist, which until the second half of the 20th century, was a right of passage for craftsmen and artists alike. Today, art students must adapt to what amounts to a series of systematic deprivations, and are left with little choice but to learn to mimic the effects they have not been taught to achieve otherwise. Proponents of the abandonment of physical media have not experienced firsthand the creation of an oil painting using oil glazes. Their relationship to the original work of art is vicarious, hence their inability to make a distinction between a real Rembrandt and a faux (digital) Rembrandt. Who knows what the ultimate effect of the deprivation will be on future generations of art students? What is certain is the adverse impact that the abandonment of physical media in favor of digital media has had on the mark-making sensibilities of aspiring artists.

We are what we draw

The ability to draw by hand was once seen as the first and most essential skill of any artist, but in today's age, drawing is widely perceived to be an unnecessary activity. Today aspiring artists are faced with a growing prejudice that it is not trendy to draw, and that those who do draw are remnants of something that used to be, quaint anachronisms rooted in a bygone past. Many art schools no longer emphasize drawing, preferring to equip their students
with the latest digital or video cameras and 3-D printers. With computer-based drawing and modeling tools becoming increasingly prevalent in schools, the core curriculum is moving further and further toward the integration of technology into the classroom at the expense of hand drawing. And with administrators, teachers, and students divided over the value of mastering script and flowing, calligraphic signatures, there is a growing trend—in an age dominated by keyboards, mobile devices, and touchpads—to eliminate cursive from elementary school curriculums. Some consider cursive to be counterproductive, an anachronism in a digitized society where even signatures are now electronic; I believe it remains an indispensable pedagogical tool, because its study can improve fine motor skills and foster greater literacy, as well as help students discover their identity.

I also believe that marks, signs, and symbols made on physical surfaces with a stylus, pencil, or brush have a way of restoring authenticity to the image, and can serve as a healthy antidote to the artificiality spawned by the unbridled simulacra of our age, whereby illusion becomes a substitute for reality. I encourage students to create drawings that are born of steadfast observation, and whose skill, care, and determination invite the viewer to feel and to think—drawings that are not merely sensational attempts to get a message across in a matter of seconds. In other words, drawings should invite repeated viewings, and link us to a profound instinct in our being, as distinct from the cursory superficiality of today's mass media communications.

It is important to note that computers do not engage our bodies to the extent that traditional drawing processes do. The movement of a mouse is rudimentary compared with the handling of a pencil, and lacking in tactile gratification. The pressure-sensitive digital drawing tablet that is currently affordable may be an improvement, but the tactile feedback it offers cannot be compared to that provided by a drawing tool on paper. Because the hand is focused on the mouse and tablet, while the eye is focused on the monitor, there is, inevitably, a disconnect between the hand and the eye. Compare this with the manner in which the eye follows and guides the motion of the hand in physical drawing, and you realize just how counterintuitive the process of digital drawing can be if you are not vigilant. Nothing could be further from the truth than the oft-heard cliché “the computer is just another pencil.” The steps involved in digital drawing processes can be overwhelmingly disjointed and can stymie experimentation. On the other hand, knowledge of analog processes can inform the digital in meaningful ways. For example, knowledge of color theory allows us to understand the effects of color and blend modes in digital applications, just as experimenting with hand-made stencils can inform our use of digital masking layers.

**A universal instinct**

Throughout history humans have responded to a profound need to translate
the experience of life into marks, signs, and symbols onto an infinitely varied number surfaces, using an equally varied number of tools and materials, ranging from compressed charcoal on a cave wall to a rod of gold on specially coated parchment. The medium of drawing has chronicled the history of humankind—a rich and varied tapestry comprised of countless interwoven threads, each one bearing the mark of an individual in relation to a series of larger wholes. For the novice, the act of drawing can prove irresistible: give someone a pencil and a sheet of blank paper, and they will likely leave their “mark.” For the accomplished draftsman, drawing provides the satisfying experience not only of exercising a well-honed skill, but also of giving eloquent form to a vision. In both cases, the coordinated activity of the eye, mind, and hand leads to an engagement that unifies body and soul. By restoring the haptic its rightful place in my daily existence, I find I am able to achieve a more mindful state of being. If I am drawing an object, I find myself irresistibly drawn to “wrapping my head” around it. If the drawing is of something that does not exist in the material sense, it provides me with the gratification of generating a tangible subject from an abstract idea. In drawing, form and content are co-dependent—to the point that one really cannot exist without the other. Consequently, drawing unites ideas and physicality together, and does so in a manner that requires a process both of translation and distillation. Indeed one of the virtues of drawing is the process of abstraction it demands. I find this experience to be immensely satisfying, precisely because it lends coherence to experience, and thus order to chaos.

Meaningful drawings put the conscious mind, and sometimes, perhaps more unsettling, the unconscious mind, in contact with the eye and mind of the proverbial beholder. That is one of greatest strengths of drawing: the way it makes the viewer experience what the artist is contemplating. It is, arguably, the medium that speaks more freshly, directly, and immediately about the mystery that goes on in the human mind. Indeed, if you want to get to know an artist, the drawings are the ideal place to start. Viewing a monumental painting or work of sculpture can be like attending a formal lecture or a public performance. But looking at an original drawing is another experience altogether, one more akin to having a conversation, for drawing is an inherently intimate activity where artists go to reflect on what engages them, and because of that, it is where they reveal their true temperament. A drawing can represent a map of the mind, or a labyrinth—something into which we are irresistibly drawn, and through which...
we must find a way, but from which we emerge enriched and inspired. Drawings can provide a foothold to reality, or, take flight. The spirituality of a drawing is a spirituality predicated upon realizing, making real, what had in effect been imagined. Drawing in other words, gives substance to the imagination.

**Drawing from the wellspring of history**

By and large the cultural and art historical references of the majority of art students today do not predate the advent of *Star Wars*. One of the ways in which I seek to counteract this lack of connection with the remote past is to conduct each summer an Education Abroad Program titled *Florence Revealed: Drawing From The Wellspring Of Renaissance Thought And Vision*. This program permits students to spend the entire month of June in the heart of Florence, Italy. Through daily life-drawing sessions conducted *all’aperto* (in the open), students immerse themselves in the cultural heritage of the city. Excursions to venerable landmark *piazzas*, churches, and museums provide students with the essential primary source material for their city-based sketchbook entries, while providing an art historical foundation to the program at large. A second part of the program, titled *Beyond the Walls of Florence*, is dedicated to the creation of nature studies that range from (macro) views of the city itself to (micro) studies of Tuscan flora. Explorations of Florence’s surrounding hills (*Fiesole, Bellosguardo, Piazzale Michelangelo*, etc.) and visits to Florence’s fabled Boboli Gardens and the *Orto Botanico* (Botanical Garden) provide students with primary source material from which to create their nature-based sketchbook entries, while excursions to Siena, Pisa, and Venice serve to put the *Quattrocento Fiorentino* into the broader cultural context of its time. Students have the opportunity to learn about the masterpieces of the Florentine Renaissance by communing with them for extended periods of time. The drawings they make are the fruits of repeated, sustained efforts, through which they construct analyzed equivalents to reality and in which every inch of the surface has to be won, argued through, and bear witness to their curiosity and spirit of inquiry. In so doing students transcend the typical tourist’s approach to art appreciation—a cursory approach that rarely has an observer spending more than a few fleeting moments before a work of art, and walking away with little more than a series of snapshots to show for their time spent in a museum. Conventional wisdom
would have us believe that photography and its related media, e.g., film and television, tell the most truth about what we see. This is not true: the camera may tell another truth about a subject, but not necessarily a more convincing one. Experience shows that the practice of drawing by hand can bring us into a deeper and more fully experienced connection to a given subject. It is often said that Leonardo drew so well because he knew about things; it is truer to say that he knew about things because he drew so well. The richly illuminated journals that the students create are a testament to the power of the sketchbook to chronicle the development of ideas through text, annotation, and drawing—just as the enthusiasm with which students respond to the challenge of working in the proverbial field is a testament to the sentient nature of their very being, and of their need to engage all their senses (touch, sight, taste, smell, sound) in conjunction with all their higher mental faculties (reason, memory, perception, will, intuition, imagination) in the creative process.

The Florentine Renaissance artists continue to amaze us to this day with the freshness of their thought, their willingness to experiment, and their modernity. However, civilized culture depends not solely on innovation and modernity, but also on a critical and imaginative assimilation of the past. In Renaissance Florence, we can see the reintegration of the Classical worldview into Modern life in not only the erudition, the pagan humanism, but also the rich mythological themes of its pantheism and the profound psychological insights it has to offer. What we experience to this day in Florence is what was made of that tradition. A continued, renewed interpretation of this tradition is a necessity for the West, if it is to understand its own. This is why I believe it is important to introduce my students to the wonders of the history of art, and the wealth of physical media that gives it its form. If I speak of the Italian Renaissance with passion, it is only because I witnessed firsthand the power of that flowering. Yet, I have always understood that the brilliance of the quattrocento was linked to a larger human brilliance that extends around the globe, and includes the unknown works of West African cultures, pre-Columbian Peruvians, and all the other ancient civilizations, which Europe only got to know in the last 500 years.

**Slow Art**

When we take the time to look, there is no limit to the secrets that drawing may unlock and reveal about how we think, look at the world, tell stories, and communicate with ourselves through the timeless language of pictures. In order to fully appreciate these attributes, we must first learn to read drawings, much the way we read a poem, or a chapter in a book. Just as time is required to leave his/her marks on a given surface, time is required of the observer to study and fully absorb the implications of the marks made on a given surface. Regrettably, the fast pace of modern life, driven as it is by the quest for immediate gratification and time-saving expediency, discourages such acts of contemplation. But when the time is taken to permit a drawing to unfold incrementally before one’s eyes, the experience can be revelatory, and permit the viewer to share in the creative process by following the different stages of a drawing: from the first tentative, underlying preparatory marks to the crowning, finishing touches. A sketchbook entry by Leonardo da Vinci is like a landscape with a history all its own, replete with peaks and valleys, and battle scars. Upon close inspection, one can detect a confluence of tentatively drawn underlying marks, followed by a series of more committed marks; these in turn are followed by a series of reworkings, scrapings, and burnishings that reveal the pulse of life. Such hand-made drawings are a testament to the passage of time, a record of the trajectory by the artist’s train of thought, one that takes the viewer from one point to another in a tangible, though mysterious, way—the exact opposite of what one can hope to experience when viewing a digitally generated image that offers no such topography, so sanitized and hidden from view are the intermediate stages of its evolution.

Just as the Slow Food movement is succeeding in counteracting the ill effects of the fast food culture, I believe that it is possible to counteract the ill effects of what is the visual equivalent of the fast food culture, namely the entertainment industry’s influence on image-making practices. Like all industries, it fosters a belief that expediency is the ultimate goal, no matter what the price, in the way that the fast food industry champions quantity over quality. Tellingly, both McDonald’s and The Walt Disney Company rely on their ability to mechanize and sanitize the products they sell: one sells processed foods, the other processed imagery; both industries share a similar goal, namely the selling of units. The belief that the timeless, human instinct to draw can and should somehow be rendered programmable through digital technology threatens the individuality of the human mark. As I work with my computer-savvy students today, I notice that something is lost when they draw exclusively on the computer. Software interfaces can lead one to do things in increasingly formulaic ways. This is not a new crisis, of course. It is in fact as old as Gutenberg. The difference lies not with the technology, but with the speed. And that speed has led to a mediated flattening of the visual world and our tactile connections to it. In the parlance of today, it “takes the edge off.” To take the edge off is to smoothen; to smoothen is to flatten. Again, the question is nothing less than what it means to be human at a time when the faculties that define the species are subject to a mass-produced uniformity, filtered through a medium that denies the very reason for existence.

**In fine**

With the computer, the gap between reality and fantasy has never been narrower. This is because computers can organize vast pools of knowledge and synthesize organic ideas with the speed of high technology. So will hand drawing be rendered obsolete.
as a result of the predominance of smartphones and laptops? I do not believe so. Just as the printed book did not eclipse the handwritten letter, and just as the television did not eliminate film, art never truly died, despite having being momentarily suffocated by qualitative relativism. Since time immemorial artisans, artists, architects, designers, and engineers of all kinds have expressed themselves first, and most intuitively, through the infinitely rich and varied medium of drawing. Indeed the relationship between the thinking mind and the draftsman’s hand, or the link between the imagination and drawing, is a timeless continuum that has yet to be broken. And although the computer is an amazingly powerful tool, it is important to remember that even the most sophisticated machine is only as sophisticated as the mind that conceived it. Perhaps, it is the computer’s capacity to mimic the hard-won visual effects of the past that has led people to perceive it as a substitute for physical media. But why must priority necessarily be given to digital technology? The physical and the digital are not mutually exclusive—so why consider them rivals? I believe in cultivating a plurality of skills, and indeed I encourage students to cultivate their graphic abilities both on paper surfaces and drawing tablets. And because I believe in cultivating a plurality of skills, I also encourage students to cultivate their mark-making abilities both on analog surfaces and drawing tablets in the hope that the physical and the digital may stand side by side in their lives, like two doors of perception that open onto a single, unified space, a realm of infinite possibilities where there is a world waiting to be transformed through the timeless, persistent coordination of the draftsman’s eye, mind, and hand.
Craft Revisited:
MOVING TOWARD A CONSUMER REVOLUTION

BY JEROMY MCFARREN

Today’s Western economic structure, based on technology and services, is radically different from the one that existed before industrialization and has resulted in many of the economic crises that face us in the early 21st century. The control of goods has been concentrated in the hands of a few large corporations, rather than distributed throughout the community of small, independent businesses. The production of goods by corporate manufacturing, through modern machinery and technology, has displaced the labor force, separated the mind from the production process, deper- small, independent businesses. The produc- tion of goods by corporate manufacturing, through modern machinery and technology, has displaced the labor force, separated the mind from the production process, depersonalized and devalued the act of manual skill, and enslaved us to a system of forced consumption. The consequences of these manufacturing practices have had profound effects on us and on our communities.

Before the rise of industrialization, the value of human labor was immanent in the goods that were produced, where a physical connection existed between the maker, the product, and the customer/citizen, who was actively engaged in the consumption process through knowledge and the building of a network of real world relationships. Communities thrived by simply providing the necessities of life for themselves and the surrounding localities. Today, the picture is far different. According to Erik A. Swyngedouw, professor of urban planning, the new economic structure is built around four key elements: A scattered system of production that relies on cheap available labor, centralized locations of administration, niche marketing, and a focus on technology and services (Swyngedouw 1989). Through modern technology, corporations are able to create cheap products with little effort and expenditure, and to distribute manufacturing processes to locations that advance those goals. Visual arts writer Peter Dormer (1997a) noted that this redistribution of processes through machinery, production systems, and information systems has displaced the need for human skill in manufacturing. This focus on technology has resulted in the devaluing of labor and workmanship and has replaced skill with a programmed set of instructions, relegating craftsmanship to antiquity and de- noting technology as the symbol of progress (Risatti 2007).

Designed obsolescence

In order to keep this economic structure going, corporations have devised schemes of obsolescence to perpetuate the desire—de- mand cycle. Three main strategies have been employed, as illustrated by Susan Strasser, professor of American history. The first is “obsolescence of function,” where newer, better models outdate their predecessors (Strasser 1999, 276). The second is “obso- lescence of quality,” wherein the product has failure built into its design (Strasser 1999, 276). And the third strategy is that of “obsolescence of desirability,” which closely aligns with obsolescence of function and involves the product becoming replaced through trends in style (Strasser 1999, 276). The last strategy is one of focus, for it is the tactic in which consumers are so entrenched. Strasser further described obsolescence of desirability through what she termed “the fashion process”: “[It] depends on ever-expanding needs and organizes pro- duction and consumption along principles of obsolescence, seduction, and diversification” (Strasser 1999, 187–188). Consumers are continuously exposed to the creation of false needs through the market’s replacement of products by advertising and the media. The fashion process and obsolescence of desirability allow corporate manufacturers to produce excess amounts of goods that are continuously changing, while utilizing the media in order to manipulate desire for those new goods, the majority of which, if we are honest with ourselves, are much the same as those they have replaced.

Today, Western consumers have access to goods in a seemingly endless supply, which diminishes their value, while contributing to the devaluation of objects in general (Sōetsu 2010). Sociologist Daniel Miller (1995) pointed out that contemporary Western consumers are no longer inhibited by seasonality and scarcity. As a result, we have come to expect availability and affordability. The obsolescence of desirability feeds this system of abundance. The abundance of goods available at low cost and their contribution to the obsolescence of desirability strategy are the result of
industrial design, an element of the division of labor by corporate manufacturers that is responsible for the conceptualization of mass-produced goods. Industrial design has led to systems of manufacturing that favor efficiency, uniformity, and limitations that create goods on a limitless scale.

The intention of industrial design is to create goods that are easily manufactured by machine technology, while promising products that are “new, improved” or “the latest,” and so forth (Petroski 1992, 170). However, the designs that espouse these created benefits are often little different from those they replace, as noted by Henry Petroski (1992), engineer and professor, who reported that radically different designs are viewed with skepticism by the public. This suggests that the basic characteristics of the objects that we use are generally appropriate to their intended function, and that recreations on these basic themes are irrelevant.

The focus on fashion and changing trends, resulting from design, illustrates the consumer’s value shift away from the tactile and toward the intellectual, where thinking and innovation have replaced the physical execution of creation (Risatti 2007). Howard Risatti, emeritus professor of art, stated that, “Abstract formal invention reflects the values of progress and efficiency typical of modern industrial society” (Risatti 2007, 168). Today, the myth of progress—the idea that modern goods have given our society freedom from labor and toil—has been fed by industrial design and the dependence on technology to fulfill our basic and created needs, leading to the constructed goal of efficiency. Efficiency implies that labor (i.e., using the hands or body during creation) is of low value, which in turn has demeaned the act of handcraft (Risatti 2007).

**Uniformity and mass production**

Industrial designers are in the business of creating desire and “satisfying” those already created (Dormer 1997c), and the designers are very much responsible for the perpetual discontent to which consumers are prone as a result of mass production. In part, this may be due to the limitations imposed on designers by machines and the available technologies they utilize. The designer’s ability to supply the instructions for an object’s creation is limited (Risatti 2007). Instead, designers must “accommodate themselves to machines,” and this compromise of technology over originality places limits on what can and cannot be manufactured (Risatti 2007, 178). A designer’s inhibition by machines, in turn, inhibits the consumer from realizing satisfaction from mass production in any meaningful sense. Because of the division of labor, the designer’s instructions must be easily understood and implemented by the programmers of the corporation’s manufacturing technology (Risatti 2007).

There are several negative consequences to the system of uniformity. The first is that, because everything looks the same, we have suffered the loss of difference and diversity in the world around us (McKnight
and Block 2010). Our worlds become predictable and devoid of any special qualities. Think about the experiences we have when visiting a culture different from our own, where the objects that serve that culture look wildly different from what we are used to. They command attention and call out for the use of all of our senses to understand them. We become actively engaged with the objects and often ask questions about their creation. Relationships form between us, the objects, and their makers—the individuals who created the objects from imagination to production—and these relationships add to our own self-awareness.

This set of experiences is denied by mass production, as pointed out by Christina Goulding (2000), professor of marketing. Dormer agrees, stating, “The commonest feature about technology, with its distributed knowledge, is that everything begins to look the same” (Dormer 1997b, 142). Others, like art historian Rafael Cardoso (2010), would argue that because of its precise construction and ubiquity, uniformity is viewed negatively by people like myself. Uniformity, however, is unacceptable because it offers the same experience to everyone, it denies the uniqueness of the individual, and it is devoid of the true value that resides within anything handmade by one individual for another. With the mass-produced object, the individual can only bring his or her own experience to the object; there is no reciprocation, no experience that leads to a context of self-fulfillment (Risatti 2007).

Uniformity in our everyday environments has led to the predictability of our lived experiences. Mass production thrives on predictability and on the institutionalization of standards (McKnight and Block 2010). Standards imply repetition, which becomes the normal state of our lives and mirrors the constructed norms of the generalized constructed consumer (Risatti 2007). We have come to expect a limited capability of expressiveness through the objects of the marketplace. Instead of diversity and a reciprocal experience, we have come to expect and value uniformity.

 Corporations are fully aware of the consumer’s desire for fulfillment and have devised means of fooling the consumer into believing fulfillment can be achieved through mass production. This is known as mass customization, which “gives the illusion that this is just for you, even though the exact customized service or product is being offered to millions of people, all receiving the same treatment or product at the same moment” (McKnight and Block 2010, 30). Even though corporations would have us believe that they are able to provide for limitless needs, they are in fact limited by their methods of production, so that nothing that is produced by a corporate manufacturer is unique or special.

**Loss of beauty**

Another result of industrially designed goods is the general lack of beauty that is found in objects made by hand. The beauty to which I am referring is more than being merely pretty or attractive, but that deeper aesthetic quality that is imparted by the “soul” of the maker into the object’s aura; it is the human personality imbued into the object’s physical materials. An early proponent of handicraft, artist and designer William Morris (2010) stated that machine goods are ugly and a “degradation of human life,” and that people, as a result of mass production, have lost the ability to discriminate between ugliness and beauty due to the conventionality of the appropriation of mass-produced goods. More recently, artist George Nakashima also remarked on the poor quality and lack of emotional resonance in mass-produced goods (Halper and Douglas 2009, 9). The ugliness that surrounds us on a daily basis is a consequence of the corporate value placed on flexible accumulation, the ability of manufacturers to change product lines quickly in order to cater to niche markets (Smith and Riley 2009). Smaller quantities intended for specific target markets are produced in rapid succession in order to capitalize on the fads and fashions of the consumer culture. This is what the kitsch that fills the malls is intended to do; it creates the excess of goods that keep the desire–demand cycle spinning.

**Depersonalization of the worker**

Today, the value of labor and skill in handmade goods has been replaced by the intellect. This shift in values has been directed and championed by the corporate structure as a means to drive down the cost of labor. The results have been disastrous for our economy. Risatti (2007) noted that the machine, in replacing the skilled worker, has
undermined the desire to learn a handcrafted skill and thus depersonalized the act of labor. Corporate manufacturing’s transition from body to machine has actively engaged in this depersonalization by eliminating the interaction between the individual and the product. Instead, the individual, if present at all during the manufacturing process, is reduced to a tool to be used by the machine (Marx 2010, 75). As Risatti states, “Machines reverse the traditional relationship between a maker and his or her tools…. tools work as a function of man, but man works as a function of machines” (Risatti 2007, 50). The individual becomes subject to the machine and, consequently becomes alienated from the process of labor. The worker loses any sort of autonomy over the production process. He or she also loses any sort of knowledge or skill (Dormer 1997b, 102). The act of work becomes depersonalized, and the worker is no longer actively engaged in the production process, resulting in a monotonous slavery to the machine.

Additionally, machine production alters the way in which we relate to the world, further alienating and separating us from a relationship with our surroundings. Production processes favor quantity and limitless scale, which in turn depend on efficiency and predictability, four characteristics that better describe machine output than human labor (Risatti 2007). Because of this fact, technology and machinery, which have aided humanity in countless ways, have been misused to displace the human element from the production process. Dormer wrote that it is the choice of humanity to use technology toward specific ends, adding, “once technology is entrenched in a society it seems that nothing will dislodge it except another technology” (Dormer 1997c, 8). We decide how technology will be employed and must suffer the consequences of those choices (Muthesius 2010, 111). By replacing bodies with machines, we have created large-scale production at low costs with goods aplenty, but we have also relegated our fellow human beings to the endless drudgery of babysitting machines or to unemployment.

Technology can, and currently does coexist with precapitalist modes of production (Philibert 1989), because there are many things that limit the use of technology presently, such as the aesthetics of decorative details (Dormer 1997c). Mass-production techniques, in creating uniformity, must rely on machinery that often denies the ability to perform many functions that create character. In this way they stand opposed to objects marked by the human hand, which bring to them an aura of authenticity (Tucker 2004, 108), a quality defined by an object’s undisputed origin as genuine. Sociologist and Professor Emeritus Brenda Danet and Tamal Katriel, professor of communications, noted that mass production undermines the aura of cultural objects (Danet and Katriel 1994). In contrast, Risatti argued that mass-produced objects have a different aura—one of anonymity that allows them to be appropriated to any context without thought of quality and value (Risatti 2007). The dichotomy stands between the human body’s involvement in the production of goods or in its denial of any active participation. The ways in which we utilize technology determine whether human labor is valued or if human agents will become obsolete.

In the early 1900s, Alfred Loos (2010) stated that the artist’s ownership of his work was lost by the advent of the day laborer. His insight marked the beginning of the devaluation of the worker with the introduction of the machine, but other factors have since compounded this effect of machine technology through its misuse, including displaced knowledge, the threat of human obsolescence, the cheapening of labor, and, indeed, forced labor.

John McKnight, professor emeritus of communications, and organizational development consultant Peter Block wrote that management is the ability to create repetition, but since people are not all the same, the role of repetition becomes delegated to machines through technological automation, where production can become standardized and the human agent, replaceable (McKnight and Block 2010). The individual is intentionally depersonalized, in effect, to become the corporation, and to repeat procedures that result in the same experience for every individual. Human beings have a desire to express themselves in their work. Mechanical and technological processes seek to remove the variable element of human interaction to induce repeatability. As a result, the worker becomes lazy and ignorant, according to sociologist Peter R. Grahame (1994), due to the displacement of the knowledge of production from person to machine, a process recognized also by Professor Bjornar Olsen (2003), an archaeologist, and by economist Floyd K. Harmston (1983).

As human beings become removed from the process of manufacturing, and as machines replace the knowledge of the individual, the value of labor becomes cheapened, people become easily replaceable, and training is quick. These are ideas espoused by the revolutionary socialist philosopher Karl Marx, ideas that are still (even more so) relevant today. As labor loses its perceived value, and the worker becomes ignorant of the process, he or she is often denied the pride of skill and the respect that should accompany it (Marx 2010). Sociologist John O’Neill (1978) stated that human obsolescence breeds insecure work identities, a sentiment with which psychologists Mihaly Csikszentmihaly and Eugene Rochberg-Halton agreed, writing, “Innovations developed to cope with a specific problem have a way of changing the way people do things and of altering how they relate to each other; eventually they effect the way people experience their lives” (Csikszentmihaly and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 46). Machines and technology, while relieving the burden of labor, have devalued the worker and taken away much of the pride or satisfaction involved in his or her work.

As a result of displaced knowledge and human obsolescence, the worker has become dependent on the structure that dominates him. Philosopher and mechanical engineer Charles Babbage wrote, “The economy of human time is the next advantage of machinery in manufactures” (Babbage 2010, 49). As people have been generally relegated to watching over machines rather than using
them, the labor force has been reduced to being competitors for low wages (Gaskell 2010; Marx 2010). It is no secret that technology has led to unemployment; the ability of machines now able to create other machines, coupled with a focus on service-based industries, has resulted in skilled workers becoming the most unemployed sector of the workforce. As a result of more applicants for fewer jobs, corporations can pay little for the positions they do offer. The worker, fearing the loss of his or her job, is in effect a wage slave (Berger 1995), forced to work in endless monotony. The repetitious babysitting of machinery was recognized by Marx (2010) and Morris (2010) as “drudgery,” and is still regarded in the same manner today. As stated by Norbert Wiener, philosopher and mathematics professor at MIT: “It is a degradation to a human being to chain him to an oar and use him as a source of power; but it is an almost equal degradation to assign him a purely repetitive task in a factory, which demands less than a millionth of his brain capacity” (Wiener 2010, 309). Marx and philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville are correct that cheapened labor combined with a misuse of machinery leads to “helpless dependence” of the worker upon the corporate manufacturing system (Marx 2010, 75; de Tocqueville 2010, 62), a sentiment also echoed by social reformer and activist Ellen Gates Starr (2010). Individuals become alienated from their work, and their self-worth suffers as they become resigned to their fate. This inability to realize the true self through work may also contribute to an individual’s use of consumption toward self-fulfillment, in yet another cycle of alienation and consumption.

How we can fix our broken economy

A starting point toward fixing our broken economy would be to refocus the concept of value back toward the labor process, as discussed by art historian M. Anna Fariello (Tucker 2004). Workers should be provided with the dignity that accompanies the production of objects. The misuse of machinery can be corrected. Self-expression does not have to be the province only of the “free man,” as noted by Starr, but “it is only when a man is doing work which he wishes done, and delights in doing, and which he is free to do as he likes, that his work becomes a language to him” (Starr 2010, 157).

Through our purchasing decisions and consumer power, we can direct our dollars toward businesses and corporations that value human labor. The consumer revolution has already begun, and corporations, if they wish to thrive, will recognize the worth of human time. Social activist Arlene Goldbard (2006) noted that the growth of the do-it-yourself (DIY) and craft cultures is signaling this paradigm shift. A focus on buying locally redirects the value system back onto the maker, the worker, or the producer, and reassigns dignity to his or her sense of self. Miller stated, “Poverty is defined as the critical limit to our ability to realize ourselves as persons” (Miller 2010, 69). As consumers, we are responsible for the poverty that is plaguing our fellow human beings, by succumbing to the seductions of the fashion process and ignoring the processes of the production of goods. We need to wake up from the hypnotic distractions imposed on us by the mass media and become knowledgeable, active participants in putting our neighbors back to work. We should heed the words of Wendell Berry’s ample warning that “machines leave us more powerful but less content, less safe, and less free” (Berry 1987, 67).

Our definition of ourselves is currently derived from what we purchase, rather than what we produce (Csikszentmihaly and Rochberg-Halton 1981). Our economic system has come to be reflected in our daily lives by our own actions. We have relinquished our appreciation for beauty, in both goods and in the lived experience, and as a result we have displaced our appreciation for those who create beauty (Starr 2010, 158). We have allowed the corporate structure to deny us quality (Berry 1987) in the name of leisure and progress. We have essentially lost respect for the satisfaction that comes from realizing the physical manifestation of creation and labor. Our daily work results in the abstract symbol of money, not in something tangible and meaningful. Our daily goals are geared toward imitation and the illusion of status, not toward true uniqueness and self-fulfillment. Handwork—realizing the physical fruits of labor—offers an insight into meaningful value and self-realization. It is a holistic process; as we will see, craftspeople are the essence of local business and are the necessary correlates between strong local economies and satisfied consumers.

Artist Bruce Metcalf wrote, “Most Western thought, which distrusts the body and its underlying cognition as a source of valid meaning, fails to find any significance in hand labour” (Metcalf 1997, 79). However, it is in handwork that satisfaction resides. Creative thought, though responsible for all of the world’s innovations, is nothing without the skill to produce a tangible benefit. McKnight and Block (2010) noted that before industry, pride came from making something for oneself, a pride that exists today with those who propagate those skills.

This is not to say that technologies have no value, because what are tools if not technologies? Tools are handheld devices that extend the capacities of the body, while still showing the mark of the creator. Machines are mechanical devices with several parts meant for precise construction, but limit the capacities of the human agent. Craftspeople do not reject machines, but object to their misuse in displacing the body from production (Greenhalgh 1997). However, in modern industry, the “tools of the eye have displaced the tools of the hand” (Csikszentmihaly and Rochberg-Halton 1981, 93). The value of craft lies in its ability to create an object that reflects its maker and communicates its value through its use by another individual, as well as through its acquisition. Unlike machinery, tools act as bodily extensions, and the skill behind their employment communicates the abilities and sensitivities of the maker.

Choosing to surround ourselves with beauty and meaning

Today very little value is derived from, or imparted to, the objects we use on a daily basis. The objects are generally uniform in design and similar in appearance to those used
by most everyone else, made of materials that are usually devoid of natural attributes, and are thus alienated from the user on every level. We do not usually know who made them or how; and as a result have no connection to either the maker or the process. No relationship has been communicated, and often no experience gained through the acquisition of the object, which was likely obtained through an anonymous environment. Diplomat and architect Hermann Muthesius (2010) remarked that there have always been attempts to argue that objects of frequent use that are mass-produced could be artistic. I would argue that they rarely are. Value itself, as previously defined, does not, in any case, lie in an object’s aesthetic qualities alone, but in its form and existence in everything we use.

Value should be present in objects of frequent use. We should be allowed to surround ourselves with beauty and meaning. Instead, we have been convinced by corporate marketing that we need many things, as inexpensively as they can be acquired. The reality is that we only “need,” perhaps, one of most things and each item should be valuable to us. We should not be purchasing, for example, several plastic cups—which are ugly, wasteful, and bad for the environment—on a routine basis when we could spend our money on beautiful, unique, handmade cups, created by someone we know in our own community—someone who contributes to the local culture and economy. The former has zero value, while the latter is a meaningful experience that provides us with an object we will care for and be mindful of.

What this means is that choosing craft is a political statement (Wagner 2008). It denies the status quo and provides an alternative to the wasteful consumption that lines the pockets of corporate “leaders.” Choosing craft also serves as a symbol of true freedom. It is the acknowledgment that the maker’s skill is valued, and an exercise of freedom through the knowledge of doing for oneself (Dormer 1997c), as well as freedom of choice by the consumer, illustrating liberty from the oppressive forced consumption of the marketplace’s categorization of the constructed consumer. As consumers, every purchase we make is a political act. We are either supporting the hegemonic order or we are taking a stand against it. We are either supporting often distant corporations or our own communities. No one is outside of the political system, and choosing to spend our money on objects of real value communicates our devotion to ourselves, our families, and our communities.

Counterbalancing consumerism

Furthermore, craft is a tool in the fight to counterbalance the negative effects of consumerism, which has resulted in the current economic crisis. Architect Peter Greenhalgh wrote, “Three of the most important issues which face the global community… are unemployment, the exploitation of labour and the environment. All three are to do with the way things are made and are bound up with the appropriate use of technology” (Greenhalgh 1997, 113). He continued, “The way that people work, the conditions they work under, and the way they make things, is fundamental to the well-being of society. It is not possible to have a proper society if its inhabitants are not humanely and creatively employed” (33). Mass production is the very symbol of exploitation and technological misuse. It has resulted in society’s expectancy of instant gratification and in laziness, ignorance, and dissatisfaction. Craft, by its very nature, requires patience, persistence, and active involvement, and leads to the pride that is lacking in mass production.

In order to counteract the exploitative effects of mass consumption, we, as consumers, must reevaluate our intentions with the objects we buy. Assuming we are willing to make all of our purchases meaningful and socially conscientious, we can begin to address the issues of accumulation. All of the objects we use or are surrounded by on a daily basis should recall Morris’s statement that nothing that fills our lives should be anything but useful or beautiful, either serving a function or providing us with the experience of deep aesthetic enjoyment. Everything else, then, holds no place. Making this distinction is what it means to claim a stake in the goods and products that are consumed in the marketplace. It is the vital first step. Anthropologist Grant McCracken noted, “Possession rituals allow the consumer to lay
claim and assume a kind of ownership of the meaning of his or her goods” (McCracken 1988, 85). By making every purchase an act of significance, that purchase is imbued with meaning. Choosing objects that are distinctly suited to one’s own preferences imparts further meaning to those objects. Rafael Cardoso wrote, “Things made in small batches, suited to specific needs and amenable to upgrading over time, are less likely to be rapidly discarded than changeless durables that are mass-produced and dumped onto the market” (Cardoso 2010, 328). We should express ourselves—our true selves—by choosing among objects that are representative of our own lived experience. Of course, if mass-produced items limit us in this way (and, they do), then the second step to claiming a stake in our goods is to become knowledgeable about where to find the distinct, the novel, the representative of our own cultural viewpoint.

This second step requires us consumers to become citizens again, to go forth into the community, to meet the local business owners and handcrafters, and to gather the knowledge they hold. We may also decide that what we are looking for could be made at home, which, in many cases, may be true. Sociologist Stephen Harold Riggins noted, “Homemade artifacts…embody so well signs of individuality, esteem, and personal relationships” (Riggins 1994, 114). It is exactly these relationships that work toward the goal of self-fulfillment, and they take time to cultivate. Consequently, the instant gratification paradigm, to which we have become so accustomed, must be relinquished. As we actively begin to pay attention to the ethical concerns surrounding the mass-produced goods that fulfill instant gratification, the task of patience becomes easier. When choosing, we should ask ourselves who made this and how far away was it produced? What is it made of? Could we make it for ourselves or do we know someone in our communities who could produce a similar object customized to our own tastes?

To reiterate, claiming a stake in our goods refocuses the consumption goal away from accumulation and toward a meaningful experience and the communication of the self through objects. Anthropologist Mary Douglas remarked, “The essential function of consumption is its capacity to make sense … commodities are good for thinking; treat them as a nonverbal medium for the human creative faculty” (Douglas and Isherwood 1979, 62).

Placeless objects alienate the consumer. Conversely, significance and meaning are inherent in objects of a specific place (McCracken 1988); they are created by a member of a given culture through the knowledge and skill of that culture for an intended purpose of use, which, when acquired as the result of a relationship and used within a new context, communicate meanings for the user that affect memory and the senses. The objects provide the experiences that embody the creative forces for the realization of the true self. Psychologist Helga Dittmar remarked, “Symbolic meanings may often weigh more heavily when people buy ‘new things’” (Dittmar 1992, 65). When purchasing as the result of a relational context, symbolism cannot be separated; instead, it is reappropriated from the maker to the new owner. The object’s intent becomes transformed. As Risatti stated, “Only when use coincides with intention does use become one with function; only then does use become a meaningful indicator” (Risatti 2007, 46). And everything we use or fill up our lives with should be meaningful. W. R. Lethaby remarked, “Every work of art shows that it was made by a human being for a human being” [author’s stress] (Lethaby 2010, 162). If everything we use was created by someone with whom we have formed a relationship, then our lives will naturally be filled with works of art that are full of meaning. As Douglas noted, “When you are part of an object’s context it has more value” (Douglas 1994, 16). Its value lies in its socialness; it is the mediator between two individuals that influences interactions (Gell 2010). All objects should do this.

**Purchasing options**

I am fully aware that not every object may be obtained by a local hand-crafter. Electronics and hardware, in particular, may be next to impossible to find in such a manner. However, the goal is to be mindful and active in the purchasing process, to understand the consequences of our purchases. Here, the stress is on the consequence of choice. Choosing, as an active and engaged ethical consumer, refocuses the inward selfish pattern of consumption toward an outward socially aware pattern. Claiming a stake in our goods shifts the value system back toward our own well-being and self-fulfillment, and consequently the fulfillment of our families and communities.
The idea of craft as a purchasing choice can hold contradictory notions for consumers. In either case, these negative perceptions have hindered craft’s ability to be taken seriously in the realm of commerce. However, Editor Garth Clark’s statement, “The rot of death is the food for new life. Its demise presents an opportunity to rethink craft from the ground up” (Clark 2010, 451) suggests the awakening of the consumer revolution may help to turn the tide.

All consumers must learn to reevaluate what craft stands for and the high level of value its consumption entails. The reason the distinction matters is because fine craft, by its nature, requires a significant expenditure of materials and time, which results in fewer products at higher prices—the opposite of the corporate retail market that consumers are used to. Artist Charles M. Harder recognizes that quantity and price are often barriers to attracting buyers (Halper and Douglas 2009). The irony about craft’s barriers is that to many consumers, craft falls at the opposite end of the spectrum from kitsch, to that of pricey (Perry 2010). Price becomes a barrier because consumers have become divorced and alienated from the time and skill required to produce objects by hand. Richard L. Priem (2007), a professor of management, notes that consumers who are more knowledgeable about the production of goods are more likely to spend more money, pointing to the fact that consumers need to be educated on production processes.

The fact is that it is expensive to create fine crafts, made from quality materials that require extensive education and years of practice to deliver quality objects. Consumers have come to expect cheap merchandise—and an overabundance of it. They are met with dozens of options within each category of goods. Those are the perceptions, because the multitudes of options are really just small variations on uniform designs. Also, mass-produced objects are cheap because they are created by exploited labor, made from worthless materials, and are intended to be discarded after a short period of time. Additionally, the obsolescence that is built into them requires their often, frequent replacement. Consumers are led to believe that choices abound and that they are saving money, when really they are spending more money through continual replacement of predictable, boring, and uniform junk. The price paid for instant gratification is continual dissatisfaction, alienation, and a waste of money. After spending more on an item that is unique—possibly even made just for the buyer, if one collaborates with the maker—and constructed from quality materials, the consumer will likely take good care of it and have difficulty discarding it. The former option is worthless, while the latter is imbued with value and significance.

Luckily for craftspeople, there is hope. Consultant Paula Owen remarked that the preeminence of commerce has forced crafters to “cataupilate to the demands of the marketplace” (Owen 2004, 28). McKnight and Block added, “The consumer marketplace now sells as a benefit the idea that you can do business in your home” (McKnight and Block 2010, 93). The authors imply that selling goods to a broad audience through the convenience of technology has somehow spoiled the crafts movement. My position is exactly the opposite. If crafters hope to make a living from their work, access to a broad audience is essential. Though the intimacy and immediacy of the craft practice may be lost, the benefits to local communities are still present. Additionally, the consumer is provided with access to a wider search area in order to acquire the goods they require while still adhering to the relational ethic. This is a perfect example of the craftsperson utilizing a technological tool toward his or her own creative direction.

Another facet of the consumer revolution is the ethical concern surrounding the products we purchase. Artist Grayson Perry (2010) noted that consumers face critical decisions about how much they are consuming and the consequences of their purchases and stated that craftspersons are positioned to provide ideal objects to relieve the ethical dilemma. Artist Ann Mohaupt (2008), from mohop, agreed, stating that issues surrounding labor and the environment are leading consumers to artisan-made goods. Additionally, the elusive ethical concern of the constructed consumer could also be thwarted through the collaborative efforts between makers and consumers.

The final barrier to craft for consumers is the myth of the separation of art and the average person. The price of handmade goods recalls the use of art as a divider between those who have required the distinction of rank and have traditionally used fine art toward those ends and the rest of the population. If the consumer recognizes the value of handcrafted objects and is able to delay gratification in search for the objects of true self-expression, this barrier need not exist. Crafts are intended to be used, not solely to be looked at and pondered as fine art. Their beauty and craftsmanship are meant to be interacted with and handled, to “nourish” the consumer on a daily basis (Barnard 2004). They take the arts out of museums and bring them into our homes, where our experiences of them enhance our sense of ourselves and of our communities.

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**Submission Guidelines for Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore**

**Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore** is a membership magazine of the New York Folklore Society (www.nyfolklore.org).

The New York Folklore Society is a nonprofit, statewide organization dedicated to furthering cultural equity and cross-cultural understanding through programs that nurture folk cultural expressions within communities where they originate, share these traditions across cultural boundaries, and enhance the understanding and appreciation of folk culture. Through *Voices* the society communciates with professional folklorists and members of related fields, traditional artists, and a general public interested in folklore.

*Voices* is dedicated to publishing the content of folklore in the words and images of its creators and practitioners. The journal publishes research-based articles, written in an accessible style, on topics related to traditional art and life. It also features stories, interviews, reminiscences, essays, folk poetry and music, photographs, and artwork drawn from people in all parts of New York State. Columns on subjects such as photography, sound and video recording, legal and ethical issues, and the nature of traditional art and life appear in each issue.

**Editorial Policy**

**Feature articles.** Articles published in *Voices* represent original contributions to folklore studies. Although *Voices* emphasizes the folklore of New York State, the editor welcomes articles based on the folklore of any area of the world. Articles on the theory, methodology, and geography of folklore are also welcome, as are purely descriptive articles in the ethnography of folklore. In addition, *Voices* provides a home for “orphan” tales, narratives, and songs, whose contributors are urged to provide contextual information.

Authors are encouraged to include short personal reminiscences, anecdotes, isolated tales, narratives, songs, and other material that relates to and enhances their main article.

Typically feature articles range from 1,000 to 4,000 words and up to 6,000 words at the editor’s discretion.

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Letters should not exceed 500 words.

**Style**

The journal follows *The Chicago Manual of Style*. Consult Webster’s Third International Dictionary for questions of spelling, meaning, and usage, and avoid gender-specific terminology.

**Footnotes.** Endnotes and footnotes should be avoided; incorporate such information into the text. Ancillary information may be submitted as a sidebar.

**Bibliographic citations.** For citations of text from outside sources, use the author-date style described in *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For citations of text from outside sources, use the author-date style described in *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For citations of text from outside sources, use the author-date style described in *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For citations of text from outside sources, use the author-date style described in *The Chicago Manual of Style*. For citations of text from outside sources, use the author-date style described in *The Chicago Manual of Style*.

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Copy must be double spaced, with all pages numbered consecutively. To facilitate anonymous review of feature articles, the author’s name and biography should appear only on a separate title page.

Tables, charts, maps, illustrations, photographs, captions, and credits should follow the main text and be numbered consecutively. All illustrations should be clean, sharp, and camera-ready. Photographs should be prints or duplicate slides (not originals) or scanned at high resolution (300 dpi) and e-mailed to the editor as jpeg or tiff files. Captions and credits must be included. Written permission to publish each image must be obtained by authors from the copyright holders prior to submission of manuscripts, and the written permissions must accompany the manuscript (authors should keep copies).

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Send submissions as Word files to Todd DeGarmo, *Voices* Editor (e-mail preferred): degarmo@cran dalllibrary.org or New York Folklore Society, 129 Jay Street, Schenectady, NY 12305

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Did you know that *Voices* publishes creative writing, including creative fiction (such as short stories), creative nonfiction (such as memoirs and life/work stories), and poetry? We also publish artistic and ethnographic photography and artwork, in addition to research-based articles on New York State folk arts and artists.
BEING IROQUOIS: Arthur C. Parker

BY JOSEPH BRUCHAC

The Six Nations Museum in the tiny Adirondack hamlet of Onchiota is one of the little-known treasures of New York State. Within its log walls, there’s more history and culture packed than in institutions many times its size. But this column is not about that longhouse-shaped private museum or the Mohawk family, the Faddens, who have kept its doors open for more than 60 summers. I’ll write about them and its late, beloved founder Ray Tehanetorens Fadden at another time.

Instead, this essay is linked to one object in that museum. It’s a small leather bag hanging from one of the horns of a buffalo head mounted high above one of those doors.

“See that?” John Kahionhes Fadden said to me one summer when I was visiting, jerking his head up toward the buffalo. “That belonged to Arthur Parker. That was his medicine pouch.”

Arthur C. Parker. If you do not know his name, then you probably don’t know much about the Iroquois people, those five formerly warring tribes who gathered themselves into a great league of peace about a thousand years ago and who call themselves the Haudenosaunee, the “People of the Longhouse.” It was Arthur C. Parker who, through his extensive writing, his professional career as a museologist (his own description of his work), and as an activist, did much to dispel the stereotypes about Indians that characterized his time and make visible to the wider world the history and the contributions of the Haudenosaunee.

His accomplishments were not without struggle. In her 2001 book, To Be Indian, The Life of Iroquois-Seneca Arthur Caswell Parker, Joy Porter does a thorough job of exploring the life of a man who was perhaps the most published Native American writer of his time. Yet Parker, born on the Seneca Indian Reservation in western New York, also found himself struggling between the white and Indian worlds throughout his life. Although he always identified as an Indian and as an Iroquois in particular, he was only one-quarter Seneca. Since that heritage was on his father’s side, he did not qualify as a Seneca within the strictly matrilineal line of descent followed by all of the Haudenosaunee Nations, and was not enrolled. Parker expressed his displeasure about the matrilineal system in terms that I doubt endeared him to Iroquois clan mothers, stating: ‘Legalists point out that only animals, slaves, and some Indians, among them the Iroquois of New York State, take their descent from the female line’ (Porter 2001, 75). (However, when in 1903 formal adoption was offered him by the Seneca Bear clan, he accepted both the adoption and the name of Gawasowaneh, Big Snowsnake.)

The distinguished nature of his Native heritage partially explains why identification as Iroquois was so vitally important to him. Parker claimed that his great-grandmother was a direct descendant of the Seneca prophet, Handsome Lake, and a great niece of the famous orator Red Jacket. His grandfather, Nicholson Parker (1819–1892), a graduate of Albany Normal School was, as Arthur wrote ‘clerk of the Seneca nation, United States interpreter, census agent, marshall of the nation, orator, agriculturist and civil engineer’ and a ‘pioneer of progress among his people’ (Porter 2001, 14–15). He was also the brother of the famous Ely Parker, who was both a sachem and a brevet general in the Civil War and, as I pointed out in an earlier column, a seminal source of information about Iroquois culture for such writers as Lewis Henry Morgan. (Morgan’s League of the Haudenosaunee or Iroquois, in fact, was deeply important to Arthur Parker, and he referred to it often throughout his life. ‘The influence of Morgan and my great uncle have been with me since childhood’ Parker would write, while also pointing out that he himself was born in 1881, the year of Morgan’s death [Porter 2001, 26, 40]).

His family home was filled not just with objects of Iroquois material culture, but also with the stories that his grandfather Nic had told around the fire. ‘Oh,’ Arthur Parker wrote, ‘those grandfather tales, of legends of his hunting, of traditions of his boyhood days. Those tales helped to mold the minds of his grandchildren.’ (Porter 2001, 18). As a result, Arthur grew up both in love with those Native traditions and convinced of the importance of succeeding within the white man’s world—not at all an easy task.

At age 11, Arthur moved with his family from Cattaraugus to New York City, where as a hardworking, diligent student, he graduated from White Plains High School and was a frequent visitor to the Museum of Natural History, a place that became a sort of second home for him. Though he went on to study philosophy and religion at Dickinson Seminary, his love of museums in general would lead eventually to a position as archaeologist for the State Museum in Albany and then to the job of Director of the Rochester Municipal Museum from 1924 to 1946. Museums; Native American rights (as a member of numerous intertribal rights organizations, including the Society of American Indians); and writing about Iroquois history, culture, and stories can easily be seen as the main passions in Parker’s professional life.

The selected bibliography in Porter’s biography of Parker lists over a hundred titles—from short monographs to weighty tomes on Iroquois culture. Here are some of his most significant publications, all of which focus on Iroquois culture, history, and folklore: Iroquois Uses of Maize and Other Food Plants (1910); The Code of Handsome Lake, the Seneca Prophet (1913); The Constitution of the Five Nations (1916); Life of General Ely S. Parker (1919); Seneca Myths and Folktales (1923); Skunny Wundy, Seneca Indian Tales (1926); and Red Jacket, Last of the Seneca (1952). They have informed and influenced...
generations of folklorists, historians, and storytellers, myself included.

One of my favorite stories about Arthur Parker has to do with the famous fire of March 29, 1911, that swept through the west end of the Albany State Capitol, engulfing the State Library and its ethnographic collections, including hundreds of items Parker had brought there. Braving the flames, Parker rescued priceless objects from the clouds of smoke and walls that were crashing down around him. He used the tomahawk that had belonged to the famous chief Cornplanter as his ‘fire ax and mascot,’ (Porter 2001, 76), managing to save the Iroquois wampum belts that were then part of the library collection. Those same belts, important sacred items for the Iroquois Nations, were finally repatriated from the New York State Museum in 1983 to the Iroquois Grand Council at Onondaga. If not for Parker’s bravery, they would have been lost forever seven decades earlier.

These paragraphs I’ve written may explain why, after Parker’s death, Ray Fadden would state that Arthur Parker was the greatest man he had ever known, one who desired ‘nothing for himself . . .’ and was ‘. . . ever ready to do good for everyone, no matter who’ (Porter 2001, 241).

His was truly, as Porter put it, “a life of complexity and achievement” (Porter 2001, 241). And his life was, whatever his ancestry, one that was first and foremost deeply Iroquois.

Which brings me back to that medicine bag in the Six Nations Museum and the story Ray’s son John told me: One day, John said, things were quiet here at the museum, no visitors, and his dad kept glancing up at that medicine bag.

“You know,” Ray said, “Chief Parker gave me that bag before he passed on for us to take care of it.”

He looked up at the bag.

“You know,” Ray added, “You’re not supposed to open someone else’s medicine bag. But I heard that bag has a hummingbird in it.”

Then he looked up at the bag again and nodded.

“I suppose it wouldn’t hurt to take a look after all these years.”

He went and got a ladder, took down the bag, put it on the counter and started to untie the top. But as soon as he did that, in through the open window came a hummingbird. It circled Ray’s head and then hung in midair right in front of him, wings buzzing, looking him in the eye.

And then, John said, his dad retied the top, climbed the ladder and hung that bag back on that buffalo horn where it remains to this day.

**Reference**

Joe Crookston: Singing and Painting for the Beauty

Joe Crookston defines himself as “an artist, writer, singer, guitar picker, painter, claw hammer banjo player, fiddler, eco-village member, and believer in all things possible.” Based in Ithaca, NY, he performs nationally and internationally. His CD, *Able Baker Charlie & Dog* received the most airplay of any folk acoustic recording and was awarded “Album of the Year” by the International Folk Alliance in 2009.

Joe Crookston describes his approach: “Mostly, what it comes down to is this: I deeply care about magic and human potential and creating music and art that inspires and questions and gets you singing along. Maybe you feel something you haven’t felt in a while. I am reaching for the “long note”… that place of transcendence where the audience and performer resonate and unify. Human stories and fun creative energy.”

“I stand on stage with my guitar, and fiddle and sing songs about window washers, bluebirds, ex-slaves, and the cycles of life. I like listening to people’s stories and crafting universal songs. In this world filled with bad news and cynicism, I sing and paint for the beauty that’s still left on this earth. Come to a show. Join me? Sing. Dream.”

For more information, visit Joe’s website, [www.joecrookston.com](http://www.joecrookston.com).

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You’ll find Joe’s CDs, DVD, and Songbook (Vol. 1) in our Gallery at 129 Jay Street, Schenectady, NY, and online at [www.nyfolklore.org/gallery/store/music.html](http://www.nyfolklore.org/gallery/store/music.html)

**Georgia I’m Here (CD)**—“12 songs with stories about window washers, The Empire Builder, mandolin picking, tenor guitar, … and lots of lush vocal harmonies.”

**Darkling and the Bluebird (CD)**—Sonically lush, personal, filled with spirit, cello, tenor guitar, and a little Gospel.

**Able Baker Charlie & Dog (CD)**—International Folk Alliance’s Album of the Year award (2009).

**Blue Tattoo (DVD)**—Holocaust survivor Dina Jacobson told her story. Joe crafted a song. Together they turned the message of the Holocaust into a deeply moving experience.

**Joe Crookston Songbook, Vol. 1, 2004–2013**—Includes 16 songs, stories, paintings, photos and notes on how to play each song.
Good Read

Tahawus Memories, 1941–1963: The Story of a Unique Adirondack Hometown

The Adirondack region has an abundance of many things. Amid the beautiful scenery, fresh air, fantastic trails, and great communities, there’s also some great legends and tall tales. This area is so rich with history that it’s incredibly easy for some events, people, and places to slip through the cracks in our collective memory. Until the publication of Tahawus Memories, this old titanium town seemed as though it was destined to end up in the dustbin of history.

In his book, Leonard Gereau has amassed an amazing collection of photos, stories, and ephemera from the once vibrant mining town of Tahawus. Active for just over two decades, Tahawus was built from nothing and reduced to nothing in the blink of an eye. What was once the world’s largest titanium mine was quickly forgotten. Now, Gereau has preserved the memory of Tahawus for us all to enjoy.

If you were to venture to the site of Tahawus today (as I have), you’ll find remnants of this community, but nothing that would tell of the buzzing small town that once stood in the High Peaks. Tahawus Memories is a time capsule of sorts, combining personal interviews with scenic photos and postcards, all of it beautifully presented.

This is truly a one-of-a-kind book. Packaged in a deluxe, oversized format, Tahawus Memories is a great addition to your local history bookshelf. If you have friends, family, or personal memories of the mining towns that once dotted the Adirondacks, this will surely bring back vivid memories of the way it used to be.

—Chris Linendoll
Northshire Bookstore
Saratoga Springs, NY
In Memoriam:

Hilt Kelly: Catskills Fiddler and Caller

BY JIM KIMBALL

On March 3, 2015, New York State lost one of its best traditional fiddlers and square dance callers. Hilt Kelly passed away at the age of 89, at Mountainside Residential Care Center in Margaretville.

Hilt and Stella Kelly and the Sidekicks were long central to Roxbury’s annual Fiddlers! programs, which started in 1994. Not only during these years but long before, Hilt and his music were important to old-time square dancing and music throughout the Catskills region. “Square Dance King of the Catskills” was a headline in a piece the Catskill Mountain News did on Hilt in 1994 (Galusha 1994).

Hilt Kelly’s great-great-great grandfather first settled in the Roxbury area in the pioneer generation following service in the Revolutionary War. The first in the family that we know of who played the fiddle was Hilt’s grandfather, Ward Kelly. According to Hilt, Ward bought his violin in 1882 off a second-hand dealer in Fleischmanns, NY; and this is the same instrument that Hilt played throughout the latter part of his career. Ward learned to play as a young man and then passed the art on to his son, Carson. This was an era, in the 19th and early 20th centuries, when the fiddle was central to rural entertainment. The old-fashioned house dances, barn dances, husking parties, and the like were often accompanied by dances, called and played by a local fiddler—and the Kellys filled this role in their neighborhood.

When Hilt was five years old, his parents presented him with a small tin fiddle for Christmas. He tuned it to his father’s fiddle and practiced on it whenever he had a chance. Included in Hilt’s repertoire were many of the old-time tunes passed on from his grandfather and father. A few years later, when Hilt was about 12, his great uncle, Durwood Kelly, gave him a 3/4-sized violin. With this instrument, Hilt and a cousin, Odell Kelly of Halcott Center, NY, started to play for teenage house dances. According to Hilt: “I would take the school bus up there on Fridays and stay at Odell’s house. He was 15 or 16 and played the guitar. We’d have a dance at one house one night, and somebody else’s the next. There were usually enough kids, from 12 to 17 years old, to make up a couple sets. We had a lot of fun” (Galusha 1994).

When Hilt was 15, in 1940, he bought himself a full-sized violin, and he was hired on as the regular fiddler for a local round and square dance band, the Melody Boys. This band played all over the region and sometimes several nights a week, attracting dancers from far and wide. As Hilt notes, there was no television in those days and the round and square dances were prime entertainment.

Hilt remembered: “They used to chase us all over the country. When we’d play in Westkill, people would come all the way from Shavertown and Shandaken and Millbrook. One time there were 23 sets dancing at once . . . We put ’em in three rows, with two more sets over by the refreshment stand” (Galusha 1994.) Except for a period of military service at the very end of World War II, Hilt continued to play and call dances with the Melody Boys up until 1953. He had started his own trucking business and had also been helping his widowed mother on the family farm; the late night dance gigs just got to be too much: “We’d play sometimes six or seven nights straight till 1 or 2 in the morning. By the time we packed up and drove home it was 2 or 3 a.m. I’d get a few hours sleep and then it was time to milk the cows; then I had the trucking route to do. It almost put me in the hospital” (Galusha 1994).

It was during one of those dances in 1947, at the Halcott Grange Hall, that Hilt asked Stella Mech for a dance. On October 30, 1948, Hilt and Stella were married. Stella had taken a few piano lessons in school but didn’t get
very far before her family moved the piano to the woodshed to make room for a table for summer boarders in the house. Now, Hilt and Stella were able to get their own piano, and

Hilt coached her on how to play rhythm and chords for dancing—which she did for all the remaining years of Hilt’s entertainments and dances.

In the late 1970s, with Stella on the keyboard, Hilt started his own round and square dance band, the Sidekicks. In addition to Hilt and Stella, the group was comprised of Don Strausser, of Lexington, NY, on guitar and other instruments, and Don Irwin, of Prattsville, NY, who had been taught guitar by Hilt. Both Don Strausser and Don Irwin also doubled on vocals and calling square dances. Aside from her music and all the work of raising a family and keeping house, Stella also drove a rural mail route for more than 40 years—until just a few years ago. Hilt and Stella celebrated their 66th anniversary last year.

Hilt became active for a while with the statewide and local chapter of the New York State Old Tyme Fiddlers’ Association, but eventually had to devote most of his time to the Sidekicks and their busy dance schedule. On October 9, 1994, the Roxbury Arts Group dedicated their hall to him. There were over 700 people that showed up for that dedication
and to listen to both Hilt and the other fiddlers who were invited.

And with that dedication started the long tradition of Fiddlers! Celebrations, held each fall in Hilt Kelly Hall at the Roxbury Arts Center. Excellent fiddlers from many traditions were presented each year; but the place of honor always went to Hilt Kelly. Hilt was also generous in passing on his traditions to many aspiring musicians in the Catskill region, as well as teaching youngsters at the Manhattan Country School and Roxbury Central School. In 1997, Hilton was inducted into the North American Fiddlers Hall of Fame in Osceola, NY.

Although well known to the traditional fiddling community throughout New York State and northeastern Pennsylvania, it is the people of the Catskills that have known Hilt the best and over so many years. For all the joy that he and Stella and the Sidekicks have brought to audiences and dancers throughout the region, let us offer our heartfelt thanks.

To his family and many friends, to musicians and callers who have learned from Hilt, to the legions of dancers who so long followed his old time square dances, and to his tradition-loving fans of all ages, Hilt will be long remembered.

Notes:

This article was adapted from an appreciation of Hilt Kelly, first published in the program booklet for Fiddlers! 2010, produced by the Roxbury Arts Group. Also, earlier program notes from Fiddlers! series provided source material.

Reference:

Fiddlers! 22 will be honoring Hilt Kelly this year:

FIDDLERS! 22
An Autumn Tradition in the Catskills
Sunday, October 11, 2015
Noon – 7:00 p.m.
Roxbury Arts Center, Hilt Kelly Hall, 5025 Vega Mountain Road, Roxbury, NY 12474 • 607.326.7908
Advance Tickets: $20 Adults, $18 Student/Senior
All Tickets Day of Performance: $25
Sponsored by Miller’s Drug Store

The 22nd FIDDLERS! festival is dedicated to celebrating in memoriam Hilt Kelly, the renowned Catskill region’s legendary fiddler and caller. Hilt “bowed and called” his way throughout the region, spreading joy and dancing wherever he went, and all the while mentoring young fiddlers for over 70 years. FIDDLERS! 22 will be packed with fun, featuring old and new friends of Hilt Kelly including the Tremperskill Boys, Brittany Haas & Nic Gareiss, Linsey Beckett, Laura Kortright & Steve Jacobi, and more—plus square dancing, a chili cook-off, and an All-Star Jam.

ARTIST IN THE GALLERY SERIES

K. O. Wilson, Delaware County, NY

Exhibition of Current Trains

Mr. Wilson’s photographs are taken at remote locations along hundreds of miles of railroad tracks. Unique beyond the generally unseen view of Mr. Wilson’s work is vibrancy that is post-mainstream photography. He employs shooting in low-light conditions, directly into the sun, and upon colorless landscapes.

“Binghamton”

Gallery of New York Artists at the New York Folklore Society, 129 Jay Street, Schenectady, NY 12305

Exhibit Dates: September 27 through October 24, 2015

Meet the Artist: Sunday October 4, 11AM to 2PM
Free to the Public

The New York Folklore Society’s “Artist in the Gallery” series is supported by Schenectady County Initiative Program.
On September 24, 2014, the Long Island Herald reported that Davison's Boatyard in East Rockaway would be sold to a developer who would build 80 condominiums on the waterfront site. The boatyard has a long and impressive history, as one of the first to cater to recreational fishermen and boaters in this “Five Towns” community on Long Island’s South Shore. Sadly, this story is not unique and will hopefully spur some communities to help preserve their working waterfronts.

In 1932 Russell Davison founded a yard that specialized in boat building, restoration, and service along the shores of East Rockaway. The yard was well known for building and servicing commercial fishing boats and luxury yachts, Coast Guard skiffs, and police boats. Dan Schmidt, recalled in a 2012 interview that:

Originally their purpose—Davison’s—was half involved in lumber and house moving business. Then in 1932 Russ Davidson decided he would venture into boat service and boat repairs. He had two sons and a daughter in the business—who I eventually purchased the yard from. She married Ken Cot who was the manager and mechanic. Oliver Davidson was the engineer and ran all the equipment. They manufactured anything you needed. Russ was the painter and carpenter. It was a good match because they had different skills.

Besides paintwork and woodwork, they did a lot of engine restorations. Back then boats lasted a lot longer and the engines didn’t—every 10 years you had to fix the engines. That’s when we went from being just a boatyard to also doing engine repairs.

Years ago there were painters, welders, different levels of carpenters. We had fine carpenters who did varnish work. Then there were “nuts and bolts” carpenters—they had to put seams together, caulk a boat, and put lap strakes and rivets back in. The woodworkers came from Scandinavian countries.

Over time the yard expanded its services to include dealer training on Mercruiser motors, and maintaining “party” fishing boats, such as the Commodore, the Genie May, and the Captain Tom. While motorboats were more common during the yard’s beginnings, sailboats were also part of the yard. “Oliver and Russ were sailors—they would buy sailboat hulls—bring them here and would put them together. They would sail the boat, use it, sail it, and build another one,” recalls Schmidt. Even today, there is a certain pattern among those who work in boat yards. “It’s a unique industry—no one goes to school to become a boatyard guy. You have to learn the long hard way.”

Like other industries, boat builders developed close occupational ties and worked together. According to Schmidt, “All the craftsmen knew each other and would share with each other. I remember doing that with Fred Scopinich also. We’re in business with each other as well. Russ realized [that] the customer moved around and realized that it was everybody’s customer. They worked well together in those days. You still see that locally in the trade—to help each other out.”

The architecture of boatyards is somewhat traditional, but there are unique structures found in each one. At Davison’s, the showroom sits below what was once a functioning barge purchased by Russ Davison. According to Schmidt, “First they lived on the water for two years. Then Doris came home one day and it [the barge] was up on land. It is a barge thought to be built in late 1800s. It was a working barge—like coal barges in Brooklyn—out of service—the bottom was all rotted out. He bought property, and then Davison lifted it in the air and built what is underneath it.” In addition, there was a wood carpenter’s building where Sandpiper Marine worked until the yard was sold, operated by Pat Kinneary.
Alas, Davison’s Boatyard confronted a series of economic problems that has been shared by many boatyard owners. As Schmidt explained in 2013, just after Superstorm Sandy, “It’s inevitable that at some point we will have to sell the yard, any yard or property its value expense for us to run is uneven. Boatyards used to make a living storing boats—that’s become less and less evident. Local marinas and yacht clubs now store boats. This might have been the spot in its day—but now we are sitting on a main street in a small town—three acres of property have higher and bigger values. We have adapted to knowing we can’t just make a living here. This doesn’t even support a few mechanics, a yard person, and an office person. If I were to charge the correct amount of money that would pay all the expenses going forward—to our customers—we’d have to charge five times more than what we charge—it wouldn’t work.”

Ted DeGarmo, the owner of DeGarmo Boatyard in Babylon reflected that, “There is no way that a traditional boatyard can pay the taxes that we have to pay. When you have a situation that we have on Long Island, there is no other place to get the money from except from taxpayers. The future of Long Island, as far as traditions go, is going to be a tough sell.” DeGarmo has also sold his property. “I was draining my entire savings just keeping the place afloat.”

While some preservation organizations are trying to save these working waterfronts, sadly, many are falling by the wayside. I urge those who do care about these special places to write their state officials, asking them to introduce and support legislation that preserves working waterfronts, in the same way that farmland advocates have helped preserve working farms. Only then can we pass on the maritime traditions of our communities.

Nancy Solomon is executive director of Long Island Traditions, located in Port Washington, New York. She can be reached at 516/767-8803 or info@longislandtraditions.org.
“Stable Views: Life in the Backstretch of the Thoroughbred Racetrack” was at Flushing Town Hall, Queens, NY, through June 2015. The exhibition is traveling to Traditional Arts in Upstate New York (TAUNY) in Canton for viewing from July through December 2015. Curated by NYFS Executive Director, Ellen McHale, “Stable Views: Life in the Backstretch of the Thoroughbred Racetrack” is a look at the occupational lives and words of stable workers, who work day in and day out to train and prepare racehorses for the thoroughbred racing industry. It provides a portrait for a distinct occupational folk group whose members are often linked not only through a common occupation, but also through generations of family and community connections. Funding for the exhibition was provided by an Archie Green Fellowship in Occupational Folklore from the Folklife Center of the Library of Congress, the Alfred Z. Solomon Trust, and the New York Council for the Humanities.

A second exhibition, “Farm and Field: The Rural Folk Arts of the Catskill Region” will be on display through July 2015 at the Livingston Manor Free Library. This exhibit is the work of photographer Benjamin Halpern, and illustrates the agricultural cycle in the Catskills’ region. It next travels to various locations throughout the Hudson Valley, including Bethel Woods Center for the Arts and Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County. Please check the New York Folklore Society’s website, www.nyfolklore.org, for the exhibition schedule. Support for the exhibition has been provided by the National Endowment for the Arts.

From the Director (continued from inside front cover)

master weavers from the Karen and Karenni communities who have been resettled in Albany from Burma and who are recipients of apprenticeship grants from the New York State Council on the Arts to teach their weaving to community members. Entrepreneurial in spirit, the weavers are anticipating the day when they will be offering their work for sale in retail establishments. Although the traditional art reflects Karen and Karenni heritage and culture, it also has worth for the weavers’ economic participation within Albany and the greater Capital region. While master weavers Sha Lay Paw and Kee Meh are newly at the center of the weaving enterprise, it will be interesting to see what ripples they make and what impact their weaving will have on the lives of their families and associates in the next 50 years.

Yacub Addy’s legacy reached across two continents and hundreds of people. The legacies of Sha Lay Paw and Kee Meh are yet to be determined, but I can assure you, we will all be the beneficiaries.

Ellen McHale, PhD, Executive Director
New York Folklore Society
nymfs@nyfolklore.org
www.nyfolklore.org

Current and former members of Yacub Addy’s Ghanaian ensemble, Odadaa! are recognized during a celebration of his life, May 30, 2015. Photo by Ellen McHale.

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Folk Archives Project. What could be more critical than finding a repository for an important collection? The NYFS is a leader in the preservation of our cultural heritage. Attend our workshops and order copies of NYFS books at a discount.

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A Public Voice
The NYFS raises awareness of folklore among the general public through three important channels.

Print. Voices: The Journal of New York Folklore, published twice a year, brings you folklore in the words and images of its creators and practitioners. The journal's new look distinguishes it from other publications in the field. Read Voices for news you can use about our field and legal issues, photography, sound and video recording, and archiving.

Radio. Voices of New York Traditions is a series of radio documentaries that spotlight the folklife of the state, aired on public radio. Stay tuned!

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• The society partners with statewide, regional, and national organizations, from the New York State Arts and Cultural Coalition to the American Folklore Society, and frequently presents its projects and issues at meetings of professional organizations in the allied fields of archives, history, and libraries.

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