

INTRODUCTION

SPECIAL SECTION ON MUSEUMS

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The Artes Populares/Folk Arts Working Group of the International Committee for Museums of Ethnography (ICME) was formed at the 12th General Conference of the International Council of Museums (ICOM) in 1980 at Mexico City. The general conference attracted more Latin American museum professionals than were able to attend at previous meetings of ICOM. During the discussions of ICME, many of the Latin American ethnographers, as well as their European and North American colleagues, felt the lack of emphasis on the folk arts. The concensus was that the major emphases of ICME members were directed to tribal and so-called primitive arts. Faced with collecting and interpreting material expressions of such forces as industrialization, modernization, and urbanization in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, a small number of ethnographers felt that a working group should address the vital changes in folk arts and their representation in the museum setting.

From the original eight founding members, The Folk Arts Working Group, at the time of fullest membership, grew to 35 individuals from Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Americas. Four goals were set at the initial meetings of the group. They were:

- I. To prepare a working definition of folk art
- II. To facilitate communication among museums holding folk art collections
- III. To develop a worldwide listing of folk art museums
- IV. To develop a systemitized method of documentation of collections t facilitate the sharing of information

For the first three years, the second goal of the group was addressed. Members communicated through a quarterly report put together by the coordinator of the group. While some problems of folk art collections were obliquely addressed by the brief reports, they served mainly as a means of communication.

The first concrete work of the Folk Arts Working Group took place at the 13th General Conference of CCOM held in London in the summer of 1983. After a general session at which the goals of the group were redefined, members presented six papers addressing the variety of approaches taken to folk arts in museums. Two of these papers are published here.

The next meeting of the Folk Arts Working Group took place in Arta, Greece during the last weekend of June, 1984. This session addressed the group's first goal of developing a working definition of folk arts. Between the hours of discussion, participants were presented with a sampling of the cultural traditions of Northern Greece by members of the Skoufa Society which hosted the meeting.

The focus of the papers published here, as evidenced in the title of this collection, Folk Art in Museums, is on questions of approach to folk arts in the museum milieu.

NOTES

1. Not included here were the general remarks regarding the particular approach in their respective institutions presented by Dr. S.M. Hasan, Director, Bangladesh Folk Arts and Crafts Foundation and Dr. E. Retsila, Curator, Museum of Greek Folk Art, L. Gontijo Soarco, Brazil and L. Astudillo Loor, Director, Museum of Popular Arts, CIDAO-OAS, C Cuenca, Ecuador.