

spelling was originally used to encourage the correct pronunciation of the state's name.

Brothers in Clay: The Story of Georgia Folk Pottery. By John A Burrison. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1983. Pp. xviii + 326. Notes, bibliography, checklist and index of Georgia folk potters, general index, photographs (both b-w and color), maps, geneologies of potters. \$35.00 cloth.

The Traditional Pottery of Alabama. By E. Henry Willett and Joey Brackner. Montgomery, Alabama: The Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, 1983. Pp. 70. Bibliography, photographs (both b-w and color), checklist of the exhibition. Exhibition catalog.

Reviewed by John B. Wolford.

The study of material culture and folklife is in the process of redefining itself, reconciling past trends and emphases with new ones. Historically, folklife was oriented toward the past and long-established traditions; oral or unwritten transmission and rural context were prerequisites for the careful scrutiny of objects and forms. At present, folklife has turned to more recent theories and approaches borrowed from folklore as well as from other fields--performance theory, contextual studies, behavioralism, and phenomenology have all appeared in recent research. A tension exists within the field of folklife studies between conservative and dynamic research interests, and the debates promise to result in exciting new scholarship. The two publications on Southern folk pottery reviewed here are an example of the synthesis of past- and present-orientation in folklife studies today.

When Southern folk pottery is mentioned, one

thinks of a very traditional type of folklife: a family tradition handed down from father to son; the entire enterprise conducted manually and locally (from digging the clay to grinding it, making the glaze, turning the ware and "burning" it, all in the family's self-built pottery works), the products sold or bartered within the local economy. The pottery is simple in form, utilitarian, generally unsigned and undecorated, and in forms that are locally traditional. That vision of traditional material culture is quite accurate. The subject of these books, then--Southern folk pottery--encompasses a very traditional form of folklife, a subject that traditionalists in the field would relish. The academic treatment of this subject, however, diverges from the strictly traditional purview; in a way, this also should be acceptable to most folklife scholars, notwithstanding their specific tolerances. These two books are examples of the innovative scholarship going on today, with a different approach presented in each of the two.

Burrison's *Brothers in Clay* is a masterful composite of the history, the process, and the culture of pottery-making in Georgia. One is awed by the simple and grand beauty of the churns, jugs, and other pottery, but also by the tremendous significance of pottery and the pottery works to the cultural environment. Burrison writes about Georgia folk pottery in a vivid, clear manner that is appealing to both the human and academic inclinations of readers. Through his words, he makes the people come alive--their culture and work have a vital meaning for them. The potter's world becomes so accessible to the outside world, as Burrison incorporates nearly two decades of interviews with potters and their families and descendants, as well as extensive library research. Burrison also provides the context of this occupational subculture--its technology, its economic system,

the quality of the potters' lives, the male and female roles within the occupation, interesting "characters" among the potters, the amazing percentage of intermarriage among potters throughout the state, the effects of environment on the craft, the effects of seasons, the effects of larger cultural and social changes. Burrison provides a basic overview of Georgia folk pottery, from its precedents to its last practicing workers, while filling in the larger picture with humanizing cultural, social, and personal details.

The Traditional Pottery of Alabama deals with the same subject as Burrison's book (and even with some of the same people), but it differs in one essential way: it is a catalog, and thus was intended to complement an exhibit.⁽¹⁾ Whereas Burrison's book may well become a classic work in folklife studies, Willett's and Brackner's catalog probably will not. This comparison, however, does not detract from the value of the catalog, but rather, the quality of the catalog is highlighted. The thirty-seven page essay provides a succinct, informative, and wide-ranging introduction not only to Alabama pottery, but to Southern pottery in general. Willett and Brackner compactly discuss topics found in Burrison's book; the folk technology, modes of transmission, regional influences, environmental and cultural contexts, family patterns, and aesthetics. Rather than provide a standard catalog of an art exhibition, Willett and Brackner truly educate their readers by means of both word and picture, and present their research on contexts as well as their research on forms.

Burrison's book looks (and is priced) like a coffee-table book, and has plenty of beautiful pictures to uphold this impression. But it is not a coffee table book. **Brothers in Clay** is a standard study of the Southern folk pottery tradition. It presents solid research, full

documentation, in-depth interviewing, placing an old-fashioned craft under the scrutiny of modern academic analysis. It is indeed "the story of Georgia folk pottery," as its subtitle states. Willett's and Brackner's catalog benefits from the same kind of academic intent as Burrison's, but gives a much briefer introduction to the subject. Burrison's long years of research have resulted in the best book on folk pottery to date.(2)

NOTES

1. In this case, the exhibition is one that was jointly sponsored by the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts and the Alabama State Council on the Arts and Humanities, with the assistance of the Folk Arts Program of the National Endowment of the Arts, held at various sites throughout Alabama from 12 July 1983 to 13 March 1984.

2. Other excellent research on Southern folk pottery is offered, for example, in Rinzler's and Sayers' excellent book, *The Meaders Family: North Georgia Potters* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1980). While the book about the Meaders examines the pottery tradition of a family, Burrison gives a much wider perspective.

FILM REVIEW

American Culture: The Deaf Perspective, #2, Deaf Folklore. Videofilm. Directed by Roger Mocinigo. San Francisco: San Francisco Public Library, 1984. Color, signed, close-captioned and voiced; 28 minutes.

Reviewed by Jan Laude.

American Culture: The Deaf Perspective is an exciting set of videos explaining basic aspects of deaf culture. The series includes the following titles: #1 *Deaf Heritage* (deaf people as a part of history), #2 *Deaf Folklore*, #3 *Deaf*