

# 1972 FESTIVAL OF AMERICAN FOLKLIFE

In welcoming you to this sixth Festival, we are aware of the growth and maturation of the program over these few years and wish to remind you and ourselves of its purpose. As the National Museum, the Smithsonian presents in all of its programs the experience of our peoples. One American, John Dewey, saw art as experience before many of us perceived the relationship:

"The sources of art in human experience will be learned by him who sees how the tense grace of the ballplayer infects the onlooking crowd. . . . The intelligent mechanic engaged in his job, interested in doing well and finding satisfaction in his handiwork, caring for his materials and tools with genuine affection, is artistically engaged. The difference between such a worker and the inept, careless bungler is as great in the shop as it is in the studio. Oftentimes, the product may not appeal to the esthetic sense of those who use the product. The fault, however, is oftentimes not so much with the worker as with the conditions of the market for which his product is designed. Were conditions and opportunities different, things as significant to the eye as those produced by earlier craftsmen would be made. . . .

But in any case, it is safe to say that a philosophy of art is sterilized unless it makes us aware of the function of art in relation to other modes of experience. . . . If artistic and esthetic quality is implicit in every normal experience . . .

why is it that to multitudes art seems to be an importation into experience from a foreign country and the esthetic to be a synonym for something artificial?

"The first great consideration is that life goes on in an environment; not merely *in* it but because of it. . . . Because experience is the fulfillment of an organism in its struggles and achievements in a world of things, it is art in germ. Even in its rudimentary form, it contains the promise of that delightful perception which is esthetic experience."

—John Dewey  
William James Lecture  
Harvard University, 1931

No object in the Smithsonian collections of Americana can be evaluated without reference to the experience, the culture, the people who created, and used it. We invite you to enjoy and understand this Festival as an extension of those collections—as a presentation of the experience of Americans today whose labor produces objects and food, who play music, sing, and dance in ways rooted in the experience of their parents and their most distant ancestors with reference to myriad countries and eras.

Gerald Davis  
James Morris  
Ralph Rinzler