

Famous Folk Art Collection Mounted In Museum Exhibition For Christmas

The scene is a quiet woodland in the Sabine Hills north of Rome. The year is 1221. It is the eve of Christmas and the hour is nearing midnight.

Suddenly the dark winter's night is pierced with the glow of a hundred tapers and the soft voices of men, women and children chanting the age-old hymn of the Christmas season, "Glory to God in the Highest."

A procession may be seen moving up the hillside from the nearby village of Greccio to a humble cloister of the Brothers of Francis of Assisi. Francis himself—beloved patron of the poor, of children, birds, and animals—leads his brown-robed brothers and the people of Greccio to a cave near the cloister.

to celebrate Christmas in a setting never before known. In the center of the cave, just below a makeshift altar, he had placed a manger filled with straw and in it, the figure of an infant. On either side was a live animal—the traditional ox and ass of the stable at Bethlehem.

A biographer has recorded Francis as explaining: "I want to celebrate the coming of the Son of God upon earth and see with my own eyes how poor and miserable He wished to be for our sakes."

Thus was presented for the first time a religious tableau that was the inspiration for a unique form of folk art—the Nativity crib, or creche, as it is called—found today in homes and churches throughout the

Christian world—and collected and treasured by such outstanding experts in the field as the noted American architect and designer, Alexander Girard.

Premiere Exhibition

Girard's collection of this rare folk art glorifying the birth of Christ—gathered in his world travels over a period of 30 years—has been mounted for the first time as a major museum exhibition for the 1962 Christmas season.

The exhibition, entitled simply "The Nativity," will be shown at the William Rockhill Nelson Gallery of Art in Kansas City, Mo. An elaborate setting has been constructed to accommodate more than 150 Christmas creches on loan to the gallery from the Girard Foundation of Santa Fe, N.M.

Appropriately, the exhibition with its deeply significant theme of "peace on earth," will be a benefit for the International People-to-People Program, whose aim is international understanding among the nations of the world.

Hallmark Cards, Inc., of Kansas City, whose president, Joyce C. Hall, is an executive of the People-to-People Program, has underwritten the cost of transporting the 2,000-piece collection from New Mexico and of constructing the setting.

Creche Becomes Famous

The Shrine of Greccio—where a church now stands—and the story of that Christmas scene became known throughout Europe.

In 1316, Pope John 22nd, then living at Avignon, introduced the idea of the creche to the region of Provence in southern France where it spread throughout Europe and eventually the whole Christian world.

To this day in Provence, where shepherds still tend their flocks on the hills of that rich farming area, the account of the Nativity is as real as if it were a modern miracle. A simple little creche is arranged on a table in the best room in the house and neighbors visit each other to admire the tiny clay figures called santons (little saints) fashioned from hand-made molds. They are brightly painted to represent not just the Holy Family, the shepherds, the angels and the Wise Men, but various figures in the village as well.

In Italy, and especially in the city of Naples, some of the most distinguished sculptors of the 15th Century devoted themselves to the creation of the beloved figures.

Charles 3rd, of Spain, made his own statuettes and his Sax-

FORGET SOMEONE?

If a Christmas card arrives on Dec. 24th from someone not on your mailing list, don't rush out and mail a card that will arrive after the holiday. Instead, suggests the Rust Craft greeting card company—at the end of this gay holiday season of "invitations" and "gift-giving," writing "Thank You" notes will be in vogue. Small boxes of note paper, beautifully decorated in Christmas patterns, are excellent "stuffers" in Christmas stockings, or for that small, yet distinctive gift.

on queen sewed the garments that covered them with her own hands.

Simple Folk Art

But in France, Germany and Spain, the creche was adopted also by the simple folk. Every church and home had its own hand-carved set of figures dressed, in each instance, in the clothing peculiar to that time and region.

The creche took on a variety of forms. Skilled artisans in Vienna in the 18th Century, created animated figures which enacted the Nativity with moving animals, kneeling shepherds and Wise Men presenting their gifts to the newborn Child.

Girard himself has supervised the construction of an adobe-like wall within the Kansas City museum. It has been formed in the shape of a cross into which the creches were installed in individually lighted shadow boxes.

Variety of Sizes

The scenes range in size from a single carved piece from Peru, so small it can be held in the palm of the hand, to a 4-by-7 foot Italian scene containing 172 figures.

Many are a primitive type of folk art from rural areas of Southwest United States, and from several Latin American and European nations.

"These are the expressions of simple craftsmen, potters and woodcarvers. They speak the direct language of faith. They are naive, humble, and for the most part, anonymous," Girard said.

"The figures range from the contemporary to the 17th Century and constitute the most important collection of popular Christmas art ever shown in this country," said Laurence Sickman, director of the Nelson Gallery.

Girard, who is 55, was born in New York and grew up in Florence, Italy, where he became fascinated with folk art and soon became a collector. His notable collection of toys, fabrics, masks and other artifacts are housed at the Girard Foundation which he established two years ago in Santa Fe.

His Nativity scenes include figures fashioned of wood, pottery, wax, paper, plaster, yarn, glass, lead, carved nuts and gourds and even baked bread with colored icing.

The exhibition in Kansas City will be open to the public from November through January.

DON'T FORGET "THANK YOU!"

There are three things for which thanks are due: "an invitation, a gift, a warning," says an old proverb. May we give you this gentle and timely "warning," says the Rust Craft greeting card company—at the end of this gay holiday season of "invitations" and "gift-giving," writing "Thank You" notes will be in vogue. Small boxes of note paper, beautifully decorated in Christmas patterns, are excellent "stuffers" in Christmas stockings, or for that small, yet distinctive gift.

Puppy Shopping Popular At Christmas And Should Be Done With Great Care

NEW YORK (NEA) — When Christmas comes, kennels empty out as fast as toy stores. Nearly every third letter addressed to the jolly gent with the long white beard begins, "I want a puppy."

There's no age limit on this request. It can come from a school kid or from his great Aunt Bessie, 75, who lives alone in a one-room apartment.

Pup shopping should be done as carefully as car shopping. After all, the dog usually lasts longer.

Make a mental check list, taking the personality and size of the recipient's living quarters into consideration. You wouldn't exactly brighten Aunt Bessie's Christmas if she were backed into a corner of her room by your gift of a Great Dane.

Personality is a big factor—the new owner's, not the dog's. Is he the stay-at-home or the gadabout type? Does he like to take long walks or prefer to sit in front of the fire? Or will the new master be a child?

Armed with this knowledge, you're ready to pup shop. You have 115 registered

breeds to choose from, according to Bob Bartos (manager of Friskies Research Kennels). So if you have trouble locating a pup that will please, perhaps a nice selection of imported cheeses would be a more suitable gift.

Here's how you go about barking up the right tree: Elderly Aunt Bessie probably can't take long hikes, spends a lot of time alone and has a motherly instinct.

For her you select one of the smaller breeds who loves being fussed over, such as the toy or miniature Poodle, the Dachshund, the miniature Schnauzer or Pekingese. These dogs need a minimum of exercise and adapt easily to apartment living. Small as they are, they still function as watchdogs and are mighty vocal when the need arises.

For the man who thinks of himself as the outdoor, pipe-in-mouth, be-man, yet doesn't have an estate to go with this mental

picture, a medium size, masculine-looking pet is ideal. These breeds include the Beagle, English Cocker, Airedale, Kerry Blue and the Boxer. Any one of these dogs will make the gals turn around for a second look.

Now for the children. The bluest blood or the dog with the most mixed-up canine family tree will be greeted with equal enthusiasm. But if the child is very young, choose a pup that can take it. You can count on Janie or Johnny to dish it out. Most children are prone to love a dog so much that it hurts—the dog, that is.

Better to get a pup six months of age or over. Try for the calm breeds such as the Collie or the hunting breeds. They're all good with children and in time will look upon the small fry as their own personal responsibility.

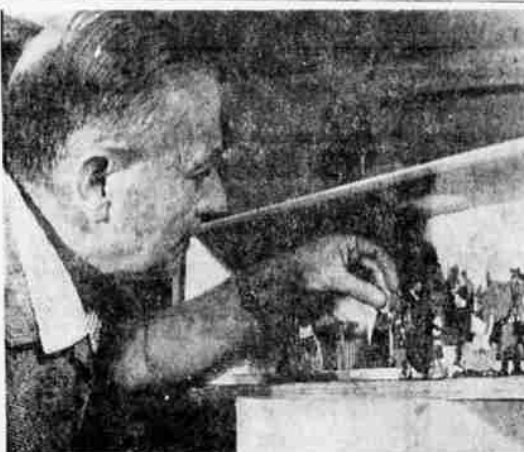
Before you're through shopping, you'll have a liberal education in dogdom. But watch it—you may fall in love yourself.



A dog's life at Christmas isn't so bad.



PAINTED POTTERY SCENE — From Guadalajara, Mexico, where the Nativity creche is called a "Nacimiento," has come the painted pottery scene shown here which is comprised of 26 pieces arranged in a three-level, alter-shaped unit.



MAKING OF CRECHES — Collector Alexander Girard, noted folk-art authority of Santa Fe, N.M., has gathered representations of the Nativity Scene from the world over. The making of creches has flourished in most Christian countries from the time of St. Francis of Assisi, who is reputed to have built the first such creche in the 13th century.

Season's Greetings

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Cleaning Studied

LINCOLN, Neb. (UPI)—No one method of cleaning the wide variety of modern surfacing materials is satisfactory for all of them, housing specialists at the University of Nebraska said.

They said paste wax, for example, gives a soft lustre to a wood floor, but causes asphalt tile to become gummy or woody.

The specialists recommended reading labels to determine the classification of the cleaning products and waxes on the market.

The following suggestions also were made. —Use water sparingly. Water, if allowed to stand on the floor, may loosen the seams, cause the material to buckle or the pores to expand. Never use water on wood.

—Use warm 90-100 degrees F. water solutions. Hot water or steam deteriorates adhesive and the materials themselves. —Avoid strong soaps and detergents that will dull or even dissolve color. Alkali dries the surfacing, making it hard and brittle.

—Avoid abrasive cleaners in instances where they may create a maze of fine scratches to hold dirt.

—Beware of solvent cleaners because many are highly inflammable and breathing the fumes from others of these products is harmful. —Use water-based compounds on vinyl and rinse well. Vinyls are non-porous and film rides on the surface.

Largest gold nugget mined in the U.S. was a chunk which weighed 195 pounds and was worth \$73,710.

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