



# The John and Pam Finley Collection of Outsider and Folk Art

John and Pam Finley, who have collected Folk Art and Outsider Art for decades, have always had a fascination with its similarities to traditional crafts and artwork by African, Oceanic, and Native American people. The rough textures, bold colors, and dedication to portraying the world as seen through the unfiltered lens of the artist all contribute to the transgressive nature of Folk and Outsider Art, which is typically not influenced by the mainstream art world nor conventional art historical traditions. As Dr. Finley wrote in his foreword for the exhibit at the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum in Biloxi,

"[We] developed a keen interest in traditional African, Oceanic, and American Indian art. Folk Art (and especially, in the context of this exhibit, Southern Black Folk Art) shares much in common with these diverse ethnographic arts. In my opinion the art objects which evolve from these environments share a strong bond of real strength and meaning. This art often seems more real and meaningful than contemporary Western art that frequently appears to be contrived as a currency to be bought and sold or as an academic exercise of one upmanship. Traditional tribal art was so central to the life of the group that its importance cannot be overemphasized. When there was no written language, the visual communicative arts were great for sharing all forms of information. This helped pass religion and tradition from one generation to the next. Interestingly, even though the art was crucial to society, the artist was often anonymous. The art seemed almost more important than the artist did, and this true strength of purpose can be felt in the presence of much of this great art. Many times Folk Art affects us as viewers in the same way. It is strong, real art. It was made to convey information or it was made by someone with an overwhelming need to create. It is often more evocative or powerful than an abstract intellectual commercial exercise. It is honest art."

The styles of Folk Art and Outsider Art certainly overlap, as well as each relating to ethnographic art through the use of color, texture, and functionality. It is certainly not surprising that a group of artwork that began with works by indigenous groups on different continents grew into a comprehensive collection of interrelating works of art and objects. As the Finley Collection has grown, items from the collection have been exhibited at The Natchez Museum, the University of Wyoming Art Museum, and the Ohr-O'Keefe Museum.

