

# Sources

## Reference Books

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*American Folk Art: A Regional Reference*. By Kristin G. Congdon and Kara K. Hallmark. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2012. 2 vols. acid free \$205 (ISBN 978-0-313-34936-2). E-book available (978-0-313-34937-9), call for pricing.

Congdon and Hallmark, a folklorist and an art educator respectively, have previously collaborated on *Artists From Latin American Cultures: A Biographical Dictionary* (Greenwood, 2002) and *Twentieth Century United States Photographers: A Student's Guide* (Greenwood, 2008). Slippery as the term “folk art” has become in contemporary culture, *American Folk Art: A Regional Reference* uses for its working definition a group of “artists who both adhere to a particular cultural context and are individually innovative about the way they make their art” (7). In its unique arrangement of 300 visual folk artists into five regions of the United States, the set hopes to inspire in the reader further exploration of the intriguing “connection between creativity and place” commonly seen in folk art (ix).

For their scope, the authors have focused on mostly well-known artists who are currently active or who have practiced their art since 1900. The celebrated self-taught painters Grandma Moses and Horace Pippin are included, as well as recipients in the visual folk arts of the NEA National Heritage Fellowship up to 2010. A perusal of the American Folk Art Museum's *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art* (Routledge, 2004) will show omissions, such as the experimental potter Billy Ray Hussey, who has departed from local tradition. However, the *Regional Reference* is not intended as a comprehensive survey, but rather as a guide to the kinds of folk arts that typify a region. As such, it complements the *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art*, not only in its regional arrangement, but by including artists who “are less well-known” and, therefore, “harder to explore in depth” (x).

Thoughtfully arranged with a general introduction and regional introductions, followed by individual entries on the artists of the region, each section is followed by a bibliography of resources. This reviewer, a native of the Midwest, found the section on “Midwest Region Artists” revealing in the way it characterizes the region's rich urban, rural, immigrant, African American, and Native American heritage. Representative artists include a bobbin lace maker, a rosemaler artist, and others who carry on various artistic traditions brought from Europe. In the Midwest's postmodern status as “the rust belt” of America, the entry on the Detroit assemblage artist Tyree Guyton is most appropriate indeed.

The *Regional Guide* is generally well illustrated with black and white photographs of artwork. There are also a handy glossary of terminology, a list of places to see folk art, and sections on “Artists Listed by Media” and “Artists Listed by Region.” While the indexing is fairly detailed, there are no references provided to areas such as states or smaller communities that might be associated with a folk artist, nor are there any maps.

Consistent with its effort to inspire further exploration, the set briefly notes some areas of folk art that do not fit into its regional arrangement, such as “prison art,” “tramp art,” and certain web-based art (8). Readers interested in exploring

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folk artists outside of the visual arts will find helpful Alan Govenar's *Masters of Traditional Arts: A Biographical Dictionary* (ABC-CLIO, 2001). Written with a general audience in mind, *American Folk Art: A Regional Reference* is an appropriate purchase for just about any library.—Nevin J. Mayer, *Coordinator of Instruction, John Carroll University, University Heights, Ohio*

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***Critical Survey of Graphic Novels: Heroes and Superheroes.*** Ed. by Bart H. Beaty and Stephen Weiner. Critical Survey. Ipswich, MA: Salem, 2012. 2 vols. \$295 (ISBN 978-1-58765-865-5). Online access included with purchase of print.

*Heroes & Superheroes*, the first title in the *Critical Survey of Graphic Novels* series from Salem Press, provides detailed analysis of important works of graphic fiction published from the Silver Age of comics to the present. As most readers might assume from the book's title, *Heroes & Superheroes* covers stories featuring the costumed characters that have become synonymous with comic books and graphic novels, such as: Superman, Batman, Spider-Man, and Captain America. The survey also includes lesser known and less traditional characters. Here one can find analysis of graphic novels featuring the anti-heroes of DC Comics' Vertigo Line such as *Hellblazer* and *Preacher*. Attention is also given to the works of many prominent independent author/artists such as Mike Mignola (*Hellboy*), Mike Allred (*Madman*), Jeff Smith (*Bone*), and Sergio Aragonés (*Groo the Wanderer*).

Entries are organized alphabetically by the title of the work. Author, artist, and publisher credits are listed for each work. Also included are first publication dates for both serial and book formats, since most of the titles covered were published in periodical comic book format before being compiled into graphic novels. Each entry includes the publication history of the title, providing information on the various formats in which the title was published; a detailed synopsis of the work's plot; a list of the work's main characters, including descriptions of their physical appearances and their personalities; an analysis of the style employed by the artist and what effect the style had upon the story; the themes with which the work deals; and a discussion of the work's impact in terms of how it was received by the public, its effect on the comics industry, and its aesthetic influence on the comics medium. Readers may locate specific graphic novels by the table of contents or by lists of works arranged by author, by artist, and by publisher. Another useful inclusion is a list of major comics industry awards and the winners for each year in which the awards were given.

This reviewer found the format of *Heroes & Superheroes* to be well-organized and very intuitive. The entries, written by over forty contributors, are of a consistently high quality, offering analysis and criticism that is both insightful and accessible. The diversity of titles covered is also quite impressive. The only weakness is the omission of particular works that readers and historians widely consider to be among the most important and influential. For example, entries on the 1960s collaborations of Stan Lee and Jack Kirby (such as *The*

*Fantastic Four*) are not included. Collected editions of the first Spider-Man stories by Stan Lee and Steve Ditko are also not included, although these important Silver Age works would have been within the survey's stated scope of coverage.

*Critical Survey of Graphic Novels: Heroes and Superheroes* is recommended for academic and public libraries. Although recent years have seen the publication of several admirable reference works devoted to comic books and graphic novels, such as M. Keith Booker's *Encyclopedia of Comic Books and Graphic Novels* (Greenwood, 2010), *Heroes & Superheroes* is a unique offering. It contains more detailed analysis and interpretation of important stories, thereby providing support for in-depth research.—Edward Whatley, *Instruction and Reference Librarian, Georgia College & State University, Milledgeville, Georgia*

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***Encyclopedia of Right-Wing Extremism in Modern American History.*** By Stephen E. Atkins. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2011. 345 pages. acid free \$89 (ISBN 978-1-59884-350-7). E-book available (978-1-59884-351-4), call for pricing.

The late Stephen Atkins has a number of books on terrorism and extremism to his credit. His last book, *The Encyclopedia of Right-Wing Extremism in Modern American History*, was completed posthumously by his wife and children. Among his previous titles are *Terrorism: a Reference Handbook* (ABC-CLIO, 1992), *The 9/11 Encyclopedia* (Praeger Security International, 2008), *Holocaust Denial as an International Movement* (Praeger, 2009), and works on atomic energy and related issues (*Historical Encyclopedia of Atomic Energy*, Greenwood, 2000; *Arms Control and Disarmament, Defense and Military, International Security and Peace*, ABC-CLIO, 1989). *Encyclopedia of Right-Wing Extremism in Modern American History* may at first glance appear to be more of a second edition of his *Encyclopedia of Modern American Extremists and Extremist Groups* (Greenwood, 2002), but it does, in fact, focus more narrowly on the right-wing and the various shades of extremism exhibited by groups embracing this ideology.

Extremism in America is not going away. Atkins defines extremist groups as those that seek radical change and defense of privilege (xii). Atkins quotes data (xiii) from the Southern Poverty Law Center which indicate that over 960 groups which fit the definition of extremist were operating in the United States as late as 2008, with a noticeable spike in Ku Klux Klan organization and the establishment of patriot groups between 2007 and 2008. The SPLC website documents nearly 120 hate incidents for 2012 alone, with actions ranging from vandalism and intimidation to assault, including burning a cross on a lawn in South Carolina in March (<http://www.splcenter.org/get-informed/hate-incidents?year=2012&state=All>). With this type and volume of activity, an encyclopedia on American extremists is called for.

The book is divided into three parts: "American White Supremacist and Neo-Nazi Movements," "Christian Identity, Christian Reconstructionism and Other Right-wing Religious