

# Global folk art?

The Local in the Global Context

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Quiz



*A tale that becomes folklore is one that is passed down and whispered around. Sometimes even sung about. The lines between fantasy and reality blur and the boundaries between truth and fiction become almost indiscernible. Speculation, over time, becomes fact. Myths, ghost stories, and fables.*

*Picking up a pen was my way of escaping into fantasy, history, and memory.*

*folklore*

Taylor Swift

# Folklore around the world



Postcards of Polish "folk types," Ethnographic Museum, Warsaw



**Johann Gottfried von Herder (1744-1803)**

German philosopher, writer and theologian who collected folk songs

- Concept of “Volk” – nation
- Folklore related to national identity

Ideen zur Philosophie der Geschichte der Menschheit (*Ideas for the Philosophy of the History of Mankind*), v.4

- Slavs: love of agriculture, domestic arts, commerce and music, charitable, submissive
- Germans: bold, enterprising hardiness and valour, heroic sense of duty, warlike,

# Folk art

“...is the art created among groups that exist within the framework of a developed society but, for geographic or cultural reasons, are largely separated from the cosmopolitan artistic developments of their time and that produce distinctive styles and objects for local needs and tastes.”

Mamie Harmon, "Folk art," *Encyclopaedia Britannica* <https://www.britannica.com/art/folk-art-visual-arts>

**“Folk art is not fact but opinion.”**

Kenneth L. Ames, "The term "Folk Art" once again," *Making it Modern. The Folk Art Collection of Elie and Viola Nadelman* (Giles, 2015), p. 78.

# Definitions of folk art according to Henry Glassie

1. Nationalistic
2. Radical
3. Existential



Tereza Bušková (UK/Czech rep.), Hidden Mothers, 2021

“If our art is the product of an elite, then folk art must be the expression of the common man” – H. Glassie

# Folklore as nostalgia

“Modern aesthetics is an aesthetic of the sublime, though a nostalgic one. It allows the unrepresentable to be put forward only as the missing contents; but the form, because of its recognizable consistency, continues to offer to the reader or viewer matter for solace and pleasure.”

Jean-Francois, Lyotard. *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*  
(Manchester University Press, 1979), p. 81

Nostalgia – memory - fantasy - mediated past

Zygmunt Bauman: “retrotopia”

Terence Ranger, Eric Hobsbawm:  
”invented traditions”





“Folk art! Growing from a joyful life, from peacefulness and humble work, from the idyllic life of our village folk, once, long ago, it was a beautiful and ardent song, a cheerful hymn of the gracious passing of days and, as the lost joy of the past, purer and fuller life it was conserved in the coffin of the ethnographic museum and it continues to powerfully affect our perception.”

Karel Teige, “New Art and Folk Creation,” *Červen* 4, no. 12 (1921): 175.



Krakow, Ethnographic Museum



Prague, Ethnographic Museum



Brno, Moravian Regional Museum



Cedar Rapids, Iowa, The Czech and Slovak National Museum and Library

Walter Benjamin (1892-1940) German philosopher, critic, writer

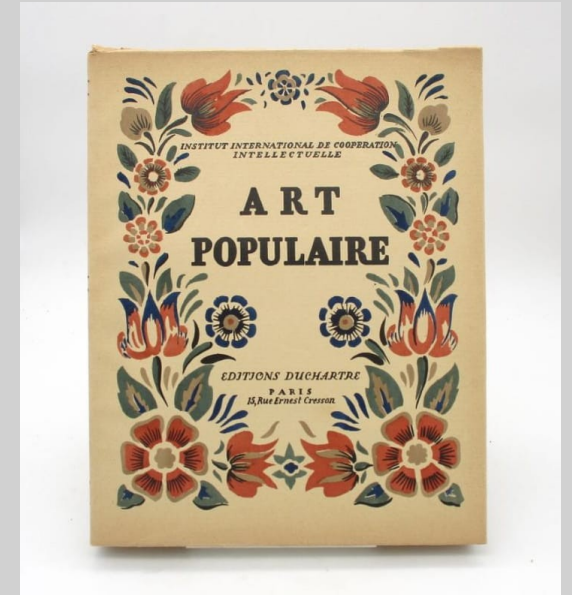
“folk art is nothing more than the cultural goods of a ruling class that have trickled down and been given a new lease on life within the framework of a broad collective”

“Toys and Play,” in *Walter Benjamin. Selected Writings*, 119

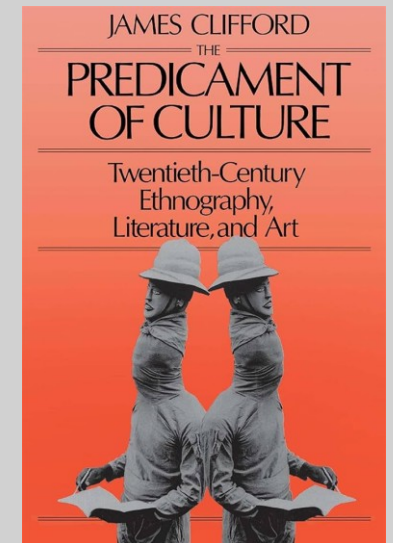
“Art teaches us to look into objects. Folk art and kitsch allow us to look outward from within objects.”

“Some remarks on folk art,” *Selected Writings*, 279

Henri Focillon (1881-1943), French art historian



James Clifford (\*1945), American interdisciplinary scholar





# Take a Tour of the



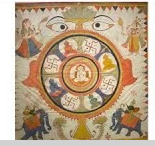
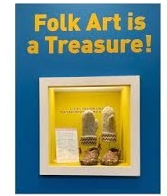
## Museum of International Folk Art, Santa Fe

Santa Fe, New Mexico USA



Leslie Fagre  
Director of Education

Kate Macuen  
Interim Director



## American Museum of Folk Art, New York





## Case study 1: Anabaptist (Haban, Hutterite) pottery







Haban vase, undated



Detail of a Ligurian majolica, late 18<sup>th</sup> century



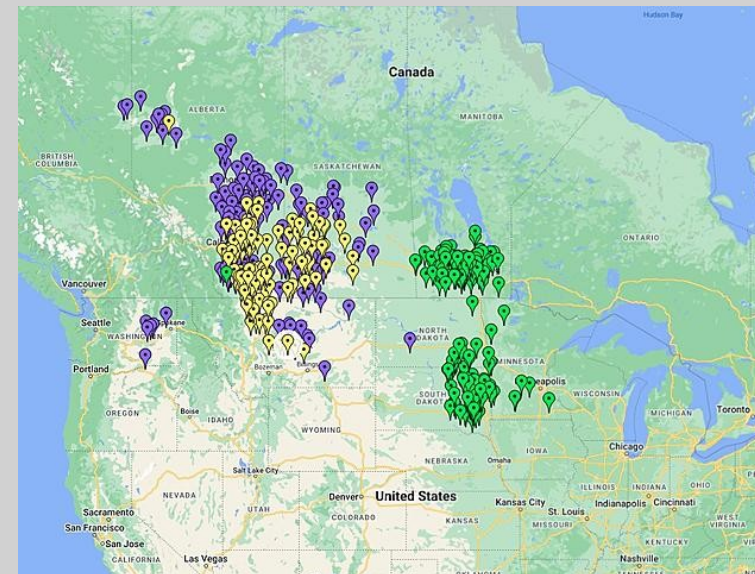
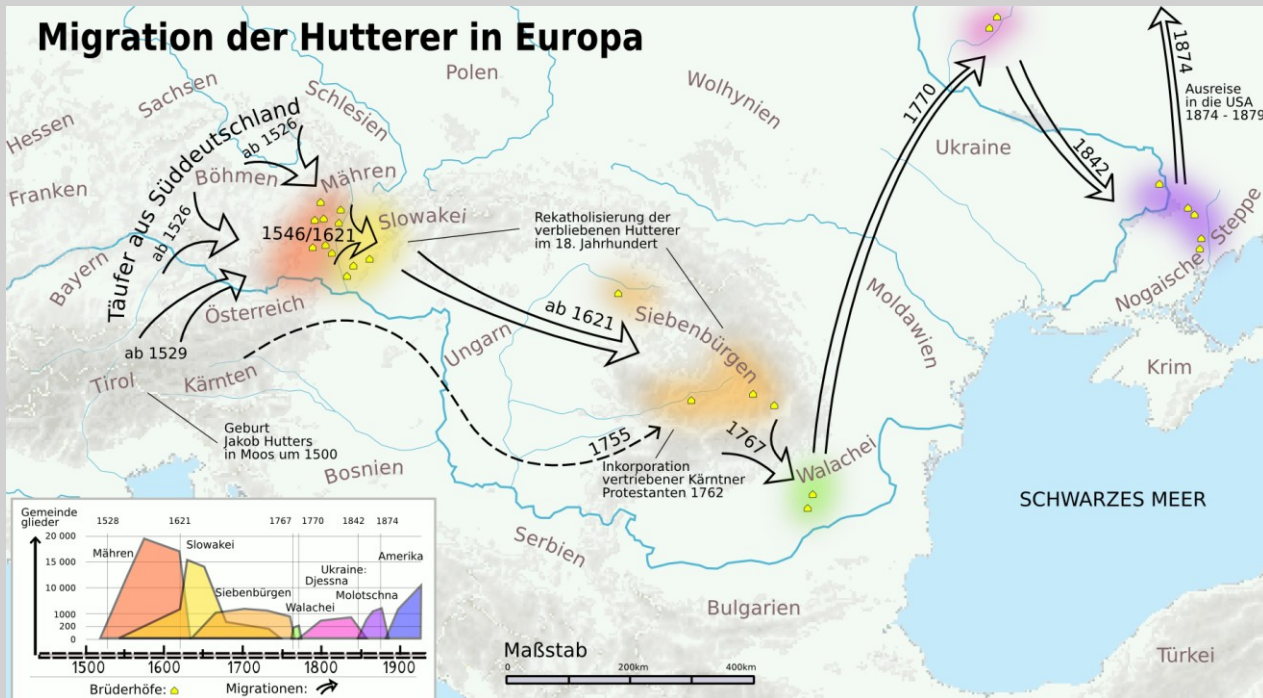
Delft porcelain



Faience plate, around 1700



Blue onion ceramics



geographical and class transfers of people and objects



# Case study 2: Folk costume



Racibórz costume, Silesia, Poland (The Ethnographic Museum, Krakow)





Paisley







Women's "Turkish headscarves," Moravia



adoption of non-native patterns, materials, techniques



## Case study 3: Depicting folk art



Joža Uprka, Ride of Kings, 1897, painting, Moravian Gallery Brno



Joža Uprka, Study of a Female Headscarf from Kunovice, around 1923, Moravian Gallery Brno



Joža Uprka, Girl from Miločany, 1918, painting.





Pueblo woman, New Mexico, 1931, photograph by František Pospíšil.



Playing with threads, photographs by František Pospíšil

## Communicating folk art through a secondary medium



## Case study 4: Morris dance



František Pospíšil, filming the moreshka dance, Korcula, 1924







Paja Joanović (1859–1957), *The Sword Dance*, private Collection



Blackface in Morris dancing

aspects of ethnic difference, racial purity, racism



Case study 5: folk dressing



Peter Pellegrini, the president of Slovakia, 2024



Jake Angeli in the Capitol riot



Kirchtag, Villach, Austria



Queens of the Miss Czech-Slovak US Pageant







Frantšek Pospíšil and White Horse Eagle



White Horse Eagle and Šárý Pospíšilová



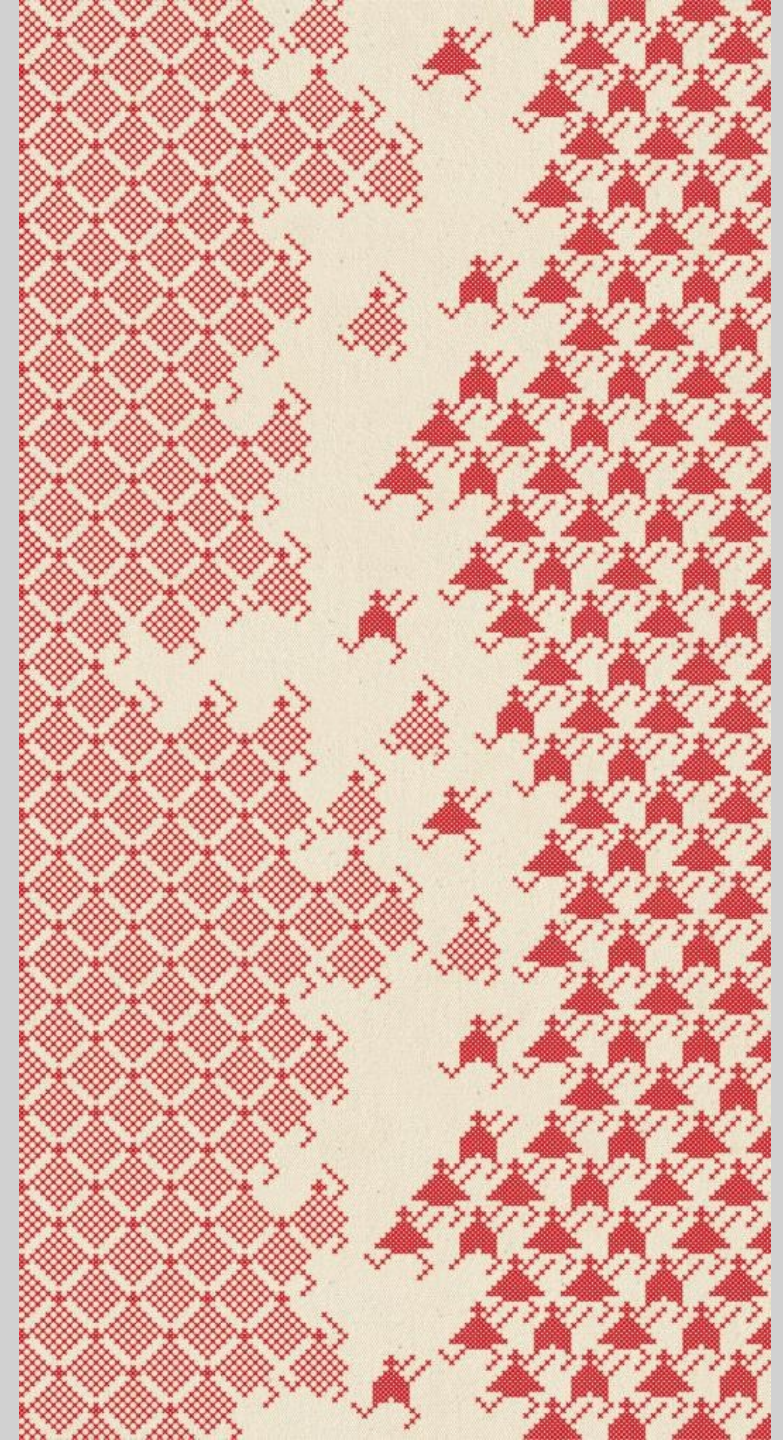
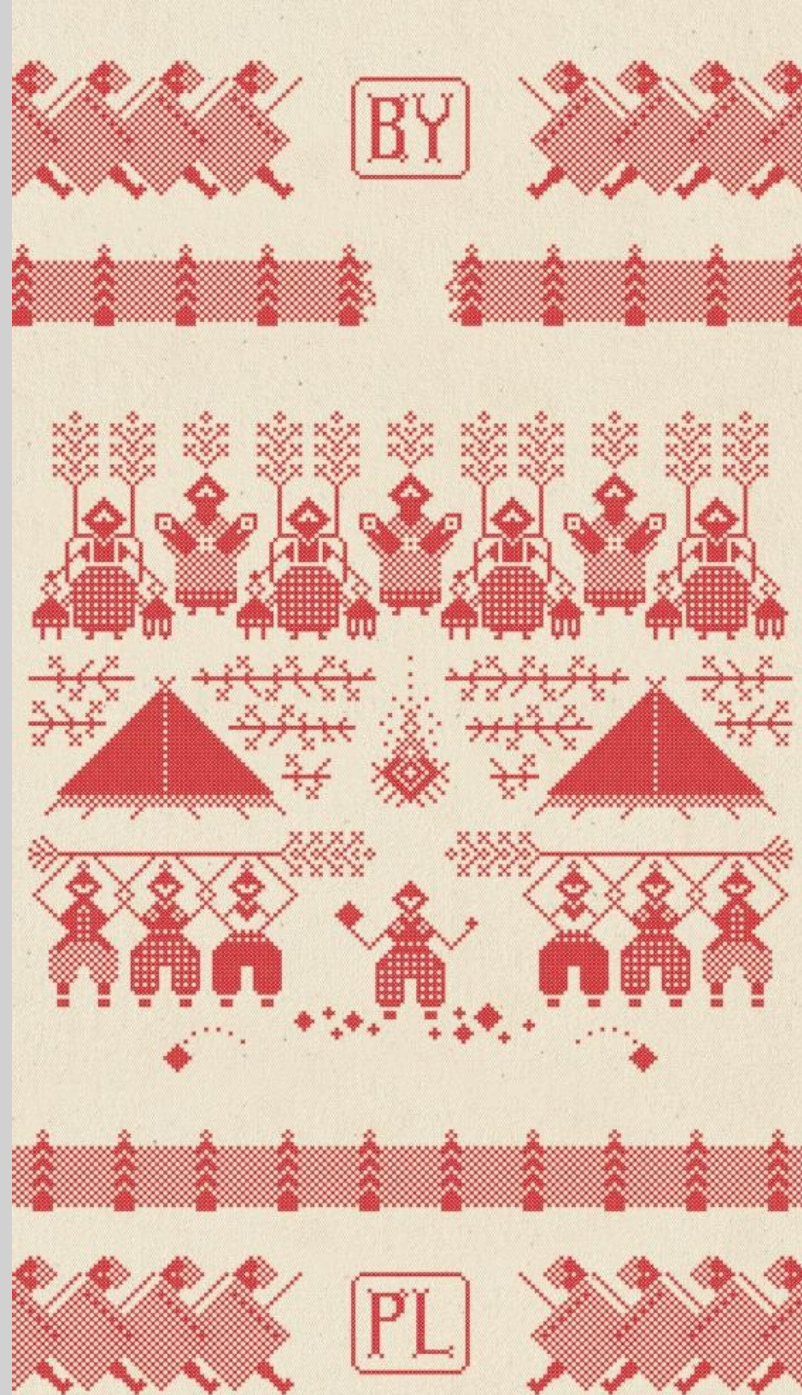




Cultural appropriation, nationalism,  
nacism

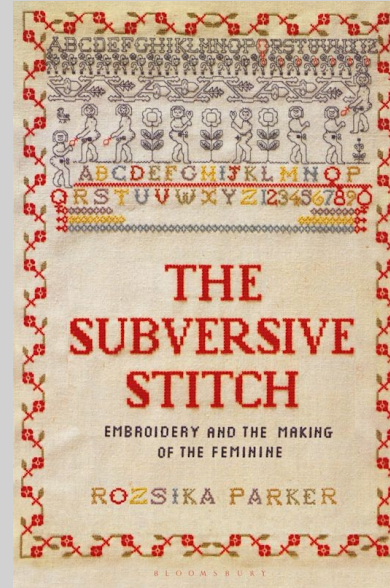


Case study 6: the subversive stitch





Rufina Bazlova (\*1990)



“Folk embroidery was used as a talisman against evil spirits, I want to believe that it has not lost this power in our days.”

Rufina Bazlova



“Folk art... opens a window onto a primordial creativity rooted in fantasy.”

Christopher Wood paraphrasing Henri Focillon, “Folk Art: Artistic and Scientific Works from the First Congress on Folk Arts, Prague, 1928,” *West 86<sup>th</sup>*, vol. 29, no. 1 (2022): 95.