



Grand Larson-e

by Susan Larson
susanlarson4@yahoo.com

Folk art heart of North Atlanta Trade Center

Ken Hoff may call himself The Tin Man, but I never met anyone with more heartfelt enthusiasm for what he does.

"I travel all over the country and find old buildings about to be renovated or demolished and salvage antique tin ceiling tiles," Hoff said. "I fold the tin around a piece of wood and my wife, Michele, paints them with homemade paint and homemade stain. On the back I record the history of where and when the tile was produced. There are no two alike."

Hoff has transformed ceiling tiles into an amazing variety of decorative items, including table tops and backsplashes. One masterpiece he constructed from tin crown molding which was custom made for Kresges Department Store in Detroit in 1927.

Hoff's livelihood is what's known as folk art. Also called self taught art or outsider art, these expressive pieces are produced by untrained people who draw on their culture and experiences rather than formal education. Whether it is pottery or painting, the art comes genuinely from the heart.

But producing tin treasures is only a fraction of the fun for Hoff. Traveling to folk fests all over the country is the best part. This weekend he and Michele will be gathering with over 100 exhibitors and upwards of 15,000 folk art lovers at the North Atlanta Trade Center in Norcross, where the Slotin Folk Fest will be celebrating its Sweet Sixteen Anniversary.

"I've been doing shows all over the country for 10 years but there is nothing that compares to this," Hoff said. "Steve and Amy Slotin have gone out of their way to assemble the best exhibit of self-taught artists I've ever experienced."

"Self-taught art is the most important visual culture America has ever produced," Steve Slotin said.

Banking on that belief, in 1994 Slotin took a leap of faith, cleared out his savings account and set up his first show. Over 6,000 art collectors showed up for the inaugural event. Today, because many of the world's most important folk artists are from the South, and because Slotin launched their first major exhibit right here in Gwinnett, the show has more than doubled in size and we are now recognized as the heart of the

folk art community.

"The Slotin Folk Fest is a jewel apart from all others. Just being in the presence of other artists and art lovers is a thrill," Hoff said, "but the energy of this event is kinda' like a rock concert. It has a real organic feel to it with people just being themselves. It's nothing like viewing art in a museum. Artists, like my friend Fleetwood Covington, play guitar and harmonica during the fest. I have collectors who only come to see me at this festival."

If you go this weekend, I hope you stop by to see The Tin Man. I wish I could help you find him by saying he's the one with the heart, but according to what he tells me about the Slotin Folk Fest, that would describe just about anybody.

If you go:

North Atlanta trade Center, 1700 Jeurgens Court, Norcross.

Friday, 5-10pm - \$15 - Admission includes FREE T-Shirt

Saturday, 10am-7pm - \$7

Sunday, 10am-5pm - \$7

080909

[Archive](#)

E-mail: weeklypub1@comcast.net

powered by: [Dragonfly Servers Network](#)

[Back to Top](#)