



# CRAFT IN AMERICA

*CRAFT IN AMERICA: HOLIDAY*

ARTIST BIOS

SEASON 5 / EPISODE 2

Friday, December 20, 2013 at 10pm\* on PBS

## **Harley Refsal**

is an internationally recognized figure carver, specializing in Scandinavian flat-plane wood carving. Raised in Minnesota, he has lived in Norway in the 1960s and 1980s, and traveled extensively throughout Scandinavia. Refsal, who speaks fluent Norwegian, has shared his knowledge of and skills in Scandinavian carving with thousands of carvers through courses and presentations in North America and Scandinavia and has appeared as guest woodcarver on the *Prairie Home Companion*. After retiring from teaching at Luther College, Decorah, Iowa in 2010, he is now Professor Emeritus of Scandinavian Folk Art.

## **National Gingerbread House Competition**

Each year, contestants from across the country bring their unique architectural Gingerbread masterpieces to The Grove Park Inn in Asheville, NC, where competition is at the highest level and everyone is a winner.

## **Biltmore House**

George Vanderbilt's vision for his estate in Asheville, N.C. was two-fold, to create a place to relax, entertain friends and family, and to preserve the land and its resources for generations to come. Christmas is traditionally and bountifully celebrated at Biltmore to memorialize the first Christmas in 1895 when the newly built house was first opened to the Vanderbilt family and friends.

The celebrated architect Richard Morris Hunt modeled the house on three châteaux built in 16th-century France. Newly built, it featured 4 acres of floor space, 250 rooms, 35 bedrooms, 43 bathrooms, and 65 fireplaces. The basement alone housed a swimming pool, gymnasium and changing rooms, bowling alley, servants' quarters, kitchens, and more.

The founding father of American landscape architecture, Frederick Law Olmsted designed the grounds and planned the nation's first forestry program with a focus on the environment. Sustainability is a key focus at Biltmore which participates in North Carolina's Farm to Fork initiative, a remarkable forward-looking vision implemented at the dawn of 20<sup>th</sup> century America.

## **Susan Garson**

Susan Garson grew up knowing that she would lead a life in the arts. When she began her master's work at UCLA, she was drawn to ceramics and decided to use her newly found love of hand building united with her skills as a painter to create functional objects in clay. She works with her husband, Tom Pakele in their Boulder, Colorado studio.

Susan describes her introduction to producing Judaica. She built and painted a menorah and thought "Wow! I love this!" She introduced a new aesthetic to the ceremonial objects used in the Jewish religion, incorporating whimsical imagery into her very personal expression and creating seder plates, Tzedukah boxes, Shabbat candle sticks, mezzuzahs and all manner of Judaica. She sells her work at galleries nationwide.

## **La Gran Posada**

a candle-lit procession through the streets of downtown San Antonio, is re-enacted annually by people of all ages, accompanied by hundreds of onlookers who walk along and join in the singing. This event is part of Las Posadas, one of the oldest Mexican Christmas traditions dating back to colonial times. It is a nine-day celebration from Dec. 16 to Dec. 24 symbolizing the trials Mary and Joseph endured before finding shelter in which Jesus could be born.



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## **Garcia Art Glass**

was founded by Gini Garcia in 1998 and is now a family-run hot-glass design and fabrication studio that specializes in one-of-a-kind blown glass lighting and sculpture. Designs range from functional to the whimsical and are made to client specification.

## **Veronica Castillo**

has taught over 200 women of the Casita de MujerArtes Cooperativa in San Antonio, TX to shape clay by hand since 1994. Castillo crafts exquisitely detailed, brightly colored folk art objects using centuries-old methods and symbols. She is a member of the honored Castillo Orta folk art family of Izucar de Matamoros in Puebla, Mexico, renowned for its tree of life candelabras. Politically aware and active, she incorporates many current social issues into her tree of life sculptures. In 2013 she was awarded the prestigious NEA National Heritage Fellowship for her extraordinary work.

## **Isabel and Enrique Sanchez**

have been active in the Chicano pride movement which started in San Antonio in the late 1960s. They continue to pass on family traditions and culture to their children and children's children. They are parents to Graciela Sánchez, Director of the Esperanza Peace and Justice Center in San Antonio, Texas, home to the Casita de MujerArtes Cooperativa (see Veronica Castillo).

## **Kathleen Trenchard**

has researched and worked in traditional Mexican papel picado (punched paper) ever since the early '90s when she was introduced to the technique in Huixcolotlsa, Mexico. Her work explores contemporary designs, applications and materials suitable for cut work using hammer and chisel. Trenchard has had many solo and group exhibits and teaches design, painting, drawing and art appreciation in and around San Antonio, TX.