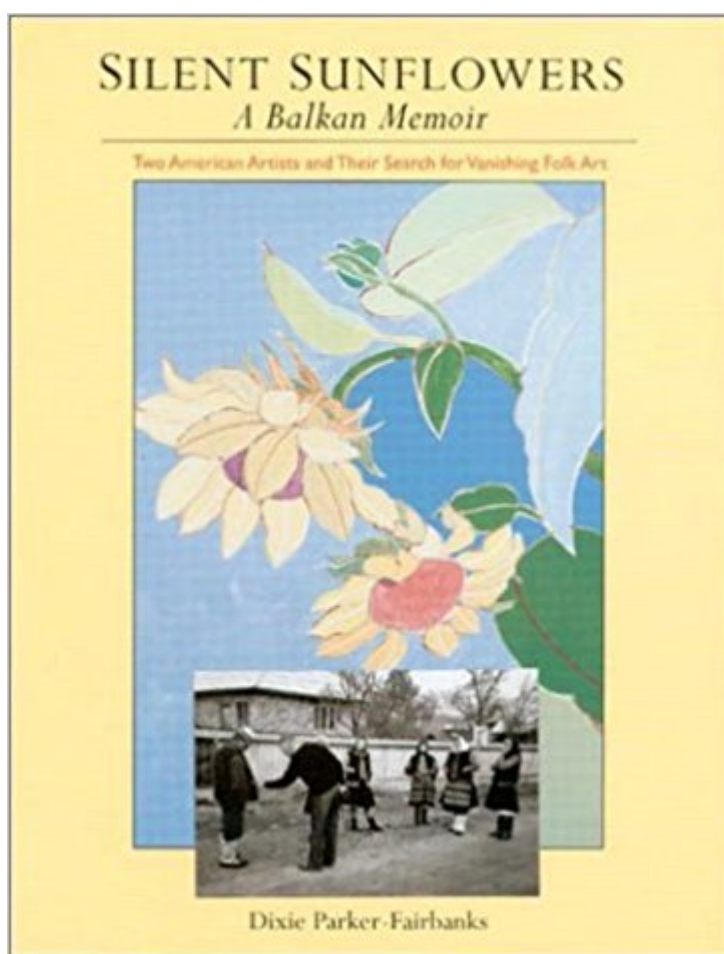


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Silent Sunflowers: A Balkan Memoir : Two American Artists And Their Search For Vanishing Folk Art



Synopsis

Washington State potter Richard Fairbanks and his wife, painter Dixie Parker-Fairbanks, embarked on a sabbatical research trip to Eastern Europe in 1986. Making daring forays into remote mountain villages and tirelessly exploring the great cities in Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary, they found the folk art and artists they searched for. The Fairbankses painstakingly gathered a huge archival photographic record of the last villages where people continued to create and live with breathtaking ornamentation in their everyday lives - in architecture, household items, clothing, and rituals.

Book Information

Paperback: 250 pages

Publisher: Fairbanks Studio; 1st edition (March 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0295980451

ISBN-13: 978-0295980454

Product Dimensions: 11 x 8.4 x 0.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 2.6 pounds

Average Customer Review: Be the first to review this item

Best Sellers Rank: #5,404,919 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #21 in [Books > Travel > United States > Alaska > Fairbanks](#) #28612 in [Books > Arts & Photography > History & Criticism > Criticism](#) #47759 in [Books > Arts & Photography > History & Criticism > History](#)

Customer Reviews

A 1986 trip to the Balkans in search of folk art by the late Washington potter Richard Fairbanks and his wife, Dixie, a painter, is exhaustively and exhaustingly treated. While including 450-plus illustrations (most in color), the text consists primarily of the couple's journals, apparently unedited. Repetitive accounts of breakfasts and bad hotels blur into one another, so that some fairly interesting accounts of folk life encountered in the countryside of Romania and Hungary are obscured beneath page after page of undistinguished we-did-this-and-we-did-that prose. Combined with the numerous fair-to-middling images, the effect is of a long slide show given by friends one wants to indulge. To be fair, undertaking such a journey (their itinerary also included Bulgaria and, briefly, Yugoslavia) in the Soviet era was unusual and enterprising, and the couple are far from being Ugly Americans, paying close and intelligent attention to political and social conditions. And their interest in folk art is informed and discriminating, even though their treatment of it is hardly

methodical the names of the embroiderers and potters whose work they collect go unrecorded, and they provide no background on the stylistic evolution of the objects they encounter. The folk art they encounter seems to function for them as a storehouse of motifs for their own practices. The book's excessive documentation flows less from editorial ego than a desire to immortalize the memory of a beloved partner and a eventful few weeks. The book accomplishes this, but is sadly too unwieldy and prolix to do more. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc.

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