

# Missouri Folk Arts Program

**Lisa L. Higgins**  
MFAP Director

Over the last seven years, the Missouri Folk Arts Program (MFAP) has slowly and surely set out to build projects that connect traditional artists with Missouri's children and their teachers. With public and private funding, as well as the extensive resources of staff, consultants, artists, and partners, MFAP has produced professional development workshops for artists, a guide for educators, and artist residencies for children. With each project, MFAP staff garnered personal and professional rewards on occasions when an artist discovered new audiences, a teacher uncovered local knowledge, and a student recovered passion for learning. Our endeavors in "folk arts in education" (FAIE) appeared to reach a new pinnacle in the fall. MFAP director Lisa Higgins co-authored a chapter in the newly published book *Through the Schoolhouse Door: Folklore, Community, Curriculum* from Utah State University

Press (2011). Almost simultaneously, the Folklore and Education Section of the American Folklore Society bestowed the Dorothy Howard Folklore and Education Prize upon a MFAP publication. *Show-Me Traditions: An Educators' Guide to Teaching Folk Arts and Folklife in Missouri Schools* was written and developed in 2009 by FAIE consultant Susan Eleuterio in collaboration with MFAP staff and master artists. The guide was subsequently revised, and an electronic version is available via PDF at our website: <http://maa.missouri.edu/mfap>. The prize included a small check, which MFAP used, along with a matching contribution from the Museum, to purchase a few copies of *Through the Schoolhouse Door* as

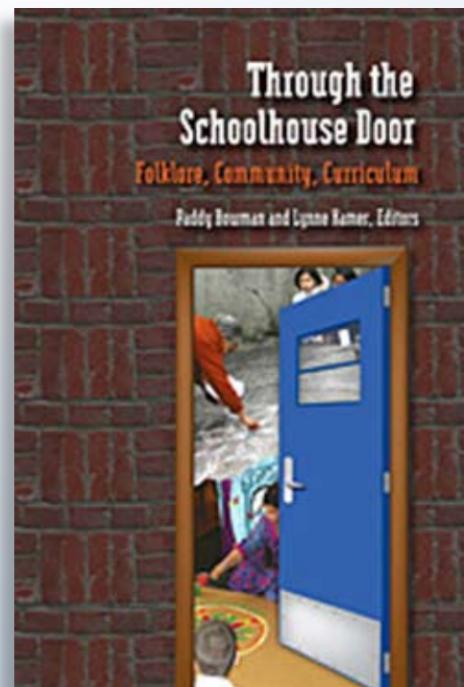
gifts for key Missouri educators, traditional artists, and art education specialists.

No time to rest on any laurels, as MFAP and Museum staff collaborated on an Arts Education grant proposal for the Missouri Arts Council. This February, with grant funds from the state agency (notification is still pending) and the College of Arts and Science, the Museum and the Missouri Folk Arts Program will commemorate Black Culture Month in a new way. The exhibit *Black Women in Art and the Stories They Tell* explores the myriad ways that visual artists utilize narrative elements, and the exhibit will be paired with a public school residency led by a Missouri artist who embodies the exhibit's theme. Award-winning master storyteller Gladys Caines Coggswell will spend a week

at two Columbia elementary schools, teaching the students the elements of narrative, as well as methods for collecting and sharing stories with audiences. The proposed partnerships with West Boulevard Elementary and Lee Expressive Arts Elementary fulfill a key component of the Museum's mission—interpretation. The residency will encourage our young neighbors to "experience authentic and significant art and artifacts firsthand" by using storytelling as a means for children to put the exhibit's paintings, photography, and sculpture into "meaningful contexts."

In the introduction to *Through the Schoolhouse Door*, editors Lynne Hamer and Paddy Bowman explain that FAIE programs "engage teachers and students in critically observing differences, as well as intersections, between elite and popular culture and the folk culture of their communities, thus helping students recognize their 'cultural capital' and agency as equally authoritative as what is promulgated by schools and media" (13). Students at both schools will have opportunities to identify those differences and intersections. They will learn to collect

and share their stories; they will visit the Museum to analyze the narrative driven works in this special exhibit; and finally, they will share their 'cultural capital' at school assemblies and during a special performance at the Museum. Be sure to check the calendar for details. Gladys Caines Coggswell will also present a performance "The Stories I Tell" at the exhibit's opening on Thursday, February 2, 2012.



Gladys Coggswell  
parentheses

Gladys Coggswell, who lives in an African-American community, has developed an extensive repertoire of family sagas told to her by her great-grandmother who boarded who rented to her grandmother recounted and focused especially on the story of "Uncle Pete," who was captured in slavery. Uncle Pete told tall tales, lessons, communicate messages about life in Missouri; from the Heart: Missouri's African-American University of Missouri Press.



ng in Missouri" by Dana Everts-

were true, I'm sure. But some of them were so outlandish that I just have to think we would be okay. But if we fought other children and made trouble for the moon.



Above: In December, Mrs. Coggswell visited Columbia for planning meetings at each school and at the Museum.