SLOW TIME
The Works of Charley, Noah, & Hazel Kinney
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Anyone with wits about them who visited the Kinney farm had to conclude that there was something quite extraordinary taking place there, but the relative otherness of the Kinneys’ existence could easily lead one to be distracted by the “old-timey” details of their lifestyle.

Charley and Noah Kinney were born 6 years apart—1906 and 1912 respectively—into a life of subsistence farming not so far removed from that eked out by early white settlers in northeast Kentucky. They died within 6 months of each other in 1991. Their lives spanned a tumultuous era in history, a time of unprecedented economic, technological, socio-political and cultural change: the advent of radio, flight, rural electrification, mechanized farming, television, chain saws, repeating rifles, indoor plumbing, and other technological marvels. There were two World Wars, and the Great Depression. Many of these developments disrupted, and made an anachronism of the way of life and world view the Kinney brothers had inherited from their parents.

Charley and Noah were well informed about material ‘progress.’ They just picked and chose which of the new ways they would fool with and ignored the rest. Strip away the few conveniences they did adopt, and these two men could survive just fine without them, thank you very much, though there’s no doubt that Hazel’s addition to the family as Noah’s wife in 1960 reinstated a much-missed thread of domestic order.

The Kinney brothers are the stuff from which myths and legends so easily arise. As artists and musicians, Charley and Noah were local standard bearers of their culture, and of a way of life that they adhered to long after most others had abandoned it for generic late 20th century America. Recognizing the roles they played, the presentation of this exhibition fulfills a long-held goal for Kentucky Folk Art Center.

Tradition only remains relevant when it is dynamic. Through their music, the Kinneys, and all who came to join in, reasserted an essential element of their birthright cultural identity. In his poetic memoir, At The Head of Salt Lick, John Harrod succeeds better than anyone in conjuring up the exquisite magic of a musical gathering in the Kinneys’ barn.
Folklorists have an easier time embracing the Kinney bothers for their music, unambiguously identified as the living transmission of folk tradition. The music they inherited in their community was kept alive by being played and replayed, enhanced through individual interpretation, and handed on to the next generation of musicians. For several decades, the barn served as the spiritual epicenter of fiddle music in northeast Kentucky.

Lee Kogan’s sensitive essay, *A Sense of Place*, rightfully designates a place for the Kinneys’ art among 20th century American masterworks, and art was the other main way by which the Kinney family expressed and reaffirmed their cultural identity. This is not always interpreted by scholars as a traditional activity, and grass roots art making as personal expression has little historic precedent in Kentucky. But, that really begs the question. Broaden your sense of storytelling to embrace the proposition that what is transmitted by the oral tradition can similarly be accomplished in visual media—a pictorial tradition—and the Kinneys’ art functions very effectively as a vehicle for cultural transmission.

All that discussion notwithstanding, the art is powerful; it stirs your gut. The Kinneys are the real thing.

The cover photograph of Charley and Noah, taken in 1985, was chosen as a portrait of them in their 70s, but also serves as an effective metaphor for their achievements: illustrating their past in transition to the present; contextualizing their lives within their history and culture; and bridging the gap between tradition and individual, artistic expression.

--Adrian Swain
Morehead, KY
April, 2006
This project would not have been completed without the cooperation, support and encouragement of numerous individuals and three other institutions.

Firstly, we want to thank all the individual collectors who generously loaned works of art: Jim and Beth Arient (The Arient Family Collection), Matthew J. Arient, Barry M. Cohen, Richard Edgeworth, Bill Glennon, Jeff Grossman, Audrey Heckler, Steve Jones, Erick Moeller, Barbara Rose and Ed Okun, George and Sue Viener, and Richard and Maggie Wenstrup. Their enthusiasm for the Kinneys was infectious!

We owe a significant debt of gratitude to Hazel Kinney, a unique and vital source of information about the family, their art and music. We have long been fortunate to have had Hazel close by throughout the years, but her ongoing assistance, encouragement and unfailing good humor, in spite of recent health problems, have been invaluable assets.

We wish to thank two special individuals, Lee Kogan and John Harrod, who wrote illuminating new material for this catalog. Their work significantly broadens the published body of knowledge on the Kinneys. Beyond the information they provide, each has enhanced the range of insights that can be gained through engagement in the creative work of these artists.

We are extremely grateful for the financial support provided by three funding organizations. A Folk Arts Program Project Grant from the Kentucky Arts Council helped initiate the research required to broaden the body of scholarly work on the Kinneys. A generous award from the Judith Rothschild Foundation enabled us, among other things, to expand, design and publish this catalog. Finally, this exhibition has been made possible by the National Endowment for the Arts as part of American Masterpieces: Three Centuries of Artistic Genius.

Works from the KFAC permanent collection feature prominently in this exhibition. Recently, the collection was expanded by the generosity of collector Richard Edgeworth who offered KFAC our pick of any Kinney pieces we wanted as a gift from his extensive, personal collection. Of the numerous Kinney pieces that we selected, several are featured in the exhibition.

Finally, we greatly appreciate the footage provided by KET, John Harrod, and John Simon, dating from the 1970s through early 1990. Thanks also to KFAC Museum Educator, Christy Herring, for her painstaking, sensitive editing of that material into the composite video, which further illuminates our insights into the Kinneys, bringing them ‘live’ to a far wider audience.
Deer, Charley Kinney, c 1985, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, collection of Steve Jones
The Kinney family’s creative expressions epitomize the traditional arts of East Kentucky as studied and described by folklorists and cultural anthropologists, but they also speak to the aesthetics of the unique, highly personal voices to which folk art historians direct their attention. This essay focuses on the latter — the vigorous, distinctive paintings and three dimensional works of Charles Kinney (1906-1991), the carvings of Noah Oliver Kinney (1912-1991), and the paintings of Hazel Bateman Kinney (b.1929).

The art of the Kinney family reflects centuries old cultural traditions rooted in an agrarian way of life that was brought to Appalachia by early settlers, predominantly from Northern Ireland and other parts of the British Isles. For the Kinneys, “art and life” were “inextricably entwined.” For these Toller Hollow residents in Lewis County, “art was a natural, essential part of life.” They actively shared their paintings, carvings, and music making with their neighbors and with a larger community of visitors. Charley Kinney was also an expert basket maker.

Appalachian crafts, like basket and pottery making and musical arts like ballads, fiddle tunes, and even clogging and square dancing, are well known outside the region. Kentucky’s visual folk artists, known in specialized circles through publications and exhibitions, deserve broader exposure. This exhibition furthers that end. Charley, his younger brother Noah, and Noah’s wife Hazel are three gifted Kentuckians whose art provides significant cultural context and sensitive personal vision. Their painted narratives and portraits and their carved and assembled figures, animals, vehicles and machinery offer a glimpse into East Kentucky life and culture going back to the early twentieth century. Their work reveals a stark existence softened by harmony with and respect for the land and its inhabitants, both animal and human. The artists movingly communicate the interrelationship of their lives and the traditions and cultural context of which they are an integral part. Their art stirs the emotions, makes the viewer smile, inspires the viewer to revere life and become one of its positive active participants.
Lion, Charley Kinney, 1970s, tempera on window shade, 35½ x 69, KFAC, gift from Richard Edgeworth

Saw Mill, Noah Kinney, 1975, painted wood, chain, fabric and cotton, 11 x 42 x 11, KFAC
While the Kinney brothers showed aptitude for and interest in art from their early years, consistent art making began later in life. This is true for many remarkable American self-taught artists who came to it upon such life “passages” as retirement, illness, accident, or the death of a spouse. The memories, beliefs, faith, and personal and social commentary expressed through their paintings and sculpture were active responses to their experiences and function as a life review that psychologists agree is important for good mental health. Through the act of art making, the Kinneys controlled their lives and traveled without limits through the continuum of time and space. They lived on “slow time,” and did not find it necessary to seasonally change the clocks.

“You can’t outdo nature, boys… nature’s got everything beat… whatever you’re cut out for, that’s what you’ll do for the rest of your life,” said Charley Kinney in 1990. As stated, he and his brother Noah demonstrated early ability and interest in art and in music. They drew pictures when they were children, but not until the 1970s did their art making intensify. For years, Charley made small clay animals, baked them in his home oven, painted and sold them for a few cents to a dollar. Eventually though, he returned to drawing which he called as easy as “falling off a log.” He remarked with pride that he drew what was “pictured in my mind” and, with an occasional exception, did not copy from pictures.

The brothers’ parents, Frank and Anna McClone Kinney were Irish-American subsistence farmers, raising chickens, corn and tobacco. Their 35 acre property in Toller Hollow near Vanceburg had a barn, hen house, workshop, and other outbuildings. They raised three sons. Edgar, the eldest son, died young. Charley was born in a log cabin. When Charley was two, the family moved across the creek to another cabin that was to be their home for the rest of their lives. Frank Kinney played the fiddle and nurtured Charley and Noah’s musical talents. Charley attended school for three years, and Noah attended through elementary school. Charley and Noah farmed, but Charley whose farm work was limited by a disability, cut hair, baked pies, and made oak-splint baskets to help the family economically.

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Charley Kinney painted the landscape and scenes of daily rural life, recording memories of past decades. Aware of changes in technology in the twentieth century, he documented the occasional automobile, truck, steam engine, airplane or dirigible. Pictures sometimes reflected current events, both local and national. Often his subject matter was rooted in religious beliefs, folklore, and local legend. Indigenous and exotic animals, as well as imaginary creatures, appear often in Charley's paintings. His art, whether descriptive or anecdotal, is imbued with intensity and, at times, subtle humor.

While tornadoes are rare in the Kentucky mountains, they occur with regularity in the central and western parts of the Commonwealth and an occasional twister will settle in mountain valleys. In fact, Kentucky was hit directly by the legendary tornado outbreak of 1974 and prior to that by another serious outbreak in 1971. These outbreaks and other instances of tornadic weather may have inspired several versions of Kinney's tumultuous natural disaster drawings. In these works, a massive centrally positioned black cloud spews smoke in swirling rhythms; the wind thunders against uprooted trees, dislocated houses, and overturned automobiles.

While Kinney never visited Niagara Falls, he captured the sublime beauty of the New York State natural wonder using a variety of colors, and once again, rhythmical, painterly brush strokes delineate the powerful torrents of water gushing over the crest creating immense foamy spray clouds as the water beats against the rocky bottom. Kinney probably remembered the scene from familiar popular sources.

The covered bridge was a familiar sight to Charley Kinney. Of hundreds that existed in the Kentucky, only twelve remain—one in Lewis County, site of the Kinney farm, and three in adjacent Fleming County. The Goddard Bridge in Fleming County, Kentucky's best known and earliest covered bridge, dates back to 1820 and is located on Kentucky Highway 32 between Morehead and Flemingsburg. While the bridge painting appears to be a generic example, Kinney was familiar with the Goddard Bridge that stood in front of a Methodist Church. In this work, Kinney documented the structure in the early years of the twentieth century with people fishing in the creek below and a horse and buggy about to cross. In subsequent years, some bridges were crossings for automobiles and even school buses.
Moonshine Still, Charley Kinney, 1984, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, KFAC
Work-related and recreational pursuits were recorded by Kinney with drawings of plowing, cherry picking, raccoon and bear hunts, and square dances. He also captured the relaxed atmosphere of Election Day in the years before women’s suffrage in Men Voting, No Women. A visit from Santa Claus in overalls and a cowboy hat marked a jovial Christmas holiday celebration as Santa is pictured approaching a house on his sled, guided by text to “come down chimley.”

In Grinding Corn multiple aspects of corn harvesting are shown with text. The “fodder shock,” identified in the text, is now associated with Halloween house decoration, but in earlier years “corn shocks” were corn stalks gathered and tied for later use as farm animal feed. An attenuated figure is at work at a long grater, making meal for corn bread. Another figure in the foreground stands with arrows that point to the text “corn bread for dinner” and “dinner pumpkin.” The artist also draws a large decorative pair of pumpkins associated with the autumnal harvest season.

Charley Kinney created a stark visual narrative in Moonshine Still. Two men set in a spare landscape, with the suggestion of the “cover” of a large tree in an open space, map out the site. With no extraneous visual detail, the larger figure, in a red hat and shirt and dark pants and shoes, appears to be watching and directing the production of the still. The smaller figure, also in a red shirt, stokes the open flame that fires the bullet-shaped copper still. A spiral pipe from the still’s neck feeds the distilled liquid into a barrel that empties from a bottom spout channeling the liquor into a container ready for the jug. A nearby larger covered barrel contains the raw “mash” of fermenting, moistened corn and malt.

Moonshine (homemade corn whiskey) production in Kentucky dates back to the beginnings of white settlement in the state. During the Whiskey Rebellion in 1794, when Kentucky distillers defied a Federal excise tax, the moonshiner began the move toward folk hero status. For two hundred years, moonshining by unlicensed distillers was an accepted cottage industry in Appalachia. An 1862 federal excise tax made moonshining illegal, but moonshiners continued to ply their trade until law enforcement and bloody battles brought them to their knees. Before racketeers sullied the high quality local production, moonshiners supplied liquor to the local community and were protected by their community. For Kentucky farmers, moonshining was a practical way to use and process one of their important commodities. Moonshiners’ and bootleggers’ status as folk heroes went beyond the mountains and merged into the national consciousness, spawning movies like 1956’s regional hit “Thunder Road” starring Roger Mitchum and leading to the development of stock car racing.
In Kentucky frontier life, self sufficiency was paramount. People cleared their own land and built log houses, outbuildings, and fences from lush forests. While they made many of their own implements, they relied on itinerant peddlers for wares they were unable to produce. Early in the twentieth century, the pack peddler served rural populations with a wide variety of basic household goods—tools, pots and pans, cutlery, clothing, and sewing notions to name a few. In an era before general stores, strip malls, and Wal-Marts, mountaineers welcomed the traveling salesman. In the picture Pak (sic) Peddler, the peddler is jauntily walking on a path, his red hat slightly tipped as he approaches his eager, waiting customer.

Zeppelin, a type of rigid airship pioneered by Count Ferdinand von Zeppelin in the early twentieth century, received enormous international publicity during the 1930s, and Charley Kinney claimed to have seen one moving over the Ohio Valley during that period. The idea of the Zeppelin recaptured Kinney’s imagination in the mid-1980s. The Kentucky artist’s various Zeppelin pictures are embellished with a series of patterned colorful stripes similar to those used on his tigers and boogers, different from the lengthwise longitudinal girders and rings characteristic of the rigid, aluminum alloy, skeletal features of the cylindrical airships. The decorative treatment adds a witty touch to the otherwise austere, gray, full-bellied vehicles. Zeppelin history was dramatically altered when the Hindenburg caught fire in May, 1937 and burst into flames in Lindhurst, New Jersey before thousands of spectators, killing more than 20 of the 97 passengers and one ground crew member.

As with the zeppelin catastrophe, Kinney’s artwork often responds to current and historical events. A local newspaper reported about government officials in a nearby state ordering the killing of wild hogs by National Guardsmen. In Wild Hogs, soldiers landing by parachute are firing at the hogs. Kinney was extremely critical of killing of the hogs, though this feeling is absent from the picture.

Boasts and tall tales are common to many cultures. While no specific local tale or oral tradition could be found as the stimulus for Kinney’s Big Fish, the exaggerated “fish” tale is universal and speaks for itself. The large fish may also relate to one of Kinney’s renditions of the Biblical story of Jonah.
Graft Ziplen, Charley Kinney, 1990, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, Arient Family Collection

Wild Hogs, Charley Kinney, 1985, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, KFAC

Big Fish, Charley Kinney, 1989, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, KFAC
Kinney may illustrate larger lessons in some of his animal works. In *Hawk and Rattlesnake*, the predatory bird and fearsome reptile pitted against each other, demonstrate “the survival of the fittest,” the rattlesnake succumbing to the hawk’s strength. Newspapers or periodicals or the natural environment surrounding his rural home may have been a source for this painting.  

Kinney’s *Lion and Rabbit* may be interpreted in more than one way. The artist may have simply chosen to depict indigenous and exotic animals side by side. But, one is tempted to look for a local legend and fable that brought these animals together. Though not specifically from Kentucky, there are stories in which the rabbit survives the animal of superior size and strength by outwitting him.
The penciled text, Who Look (at a) Snake Never Die, accompanies a drawing of people who surround a centrally placed yellow snake wrapped around a tree. This painting references a Biblical story found in Numbers, Chapter 21:

4 They traveled from Mount Hor along the route to the Red Sea, to go around Edom. But the people grew impatient on the way;

5 they spoke against God and against Moses, and said, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the desert? There is no bread! There is no water! And we detest this miserable food!”

6 Then the LORD sent venomous snakes among them; they bit the people and many Israelites died.

7 The people came to Moses and said, “We sinned when we spoke against the LORD and against you. Pray that the LORD will take the snakes away from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

8 The LORD said to Moses, “Make a snake and put it up on a pole; anyone who is bitten can look at it and live.”

9 So Moses made a bronze snake and put it up on a pole. Then when anyone was bitten by a snake and looked at the bronze snake, he lived.16

This story gave rise to a regional myth that was accompanied by an oft heard children’s rhyme, “Look a snake in the eye and never die.”17

Kinney’s tigers and lions are among his most frequently rendered subjects; without a doubt, their power, strength, and beauty fascinated him. He may have been especially impressed with stories brother Noah told following a visit to the Cincinnati Zoo with his wife and collector friends, Richard and Maggie Wenstrup. Lions, mountain lions, wild cats, tigers, even wild boogers were usually rendered with side view bodies and frontal heads, their glaring eyes directly confronting the viewer. Among Charley Kinney’s animal drawings is Cat’s Eye an enigmatic work executed, according to Hazel Kinney, when he was eight years old.18 He also drew deer and elk. Deer were common near Kinney’s home after 1950 when herds were reestablished. Elk have only recently been reestablished in the region, after being hunted and driven out by settlers in the 1800s.

Mountain Lion, Charley Kinney, 1989, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, KFAC
Cut Cherry, Charley Kinney, late 1980s, tempera and pencil, 28 x 22, collection of Erick Moeller

Charley Kinney’s haunted house and haint paintings sprang from the artist’s imagination but are rooted in Kentucky folktales. These works are the embedded with haints, boogers, spirits, or haunts that populate haunted houses. Charley believed in haints and knocking spirits. While these spirits are often formless, Kinney’s haints take on supernatural, animal characteristics. In Haint, a dark building is in the left upper portion of the picture while in the foreground slightly right of center is a large dark creature of staggering size, with a huge lion-like head and unfurled long red tongue and glinty red eyes. With a striped reddish, blue, and black body, it has whirling back paw-like legs and huge black, extending, hairy, frontal paws. Men, women, and animals appear to be running away from the fearsome beast. The people of the Appalachian region have long told “booger” and “haint” tales. These are often imagined as a Big Foot or wild man type creatures haunting the shadows in the dark mountain hollers. Beyond their obvious entertainment value, these tales were often told to children to keep them near home, especially after dark.
The Kinneys had Catholic and Protestant parents, but Noah and Hazel were drawn to Catholicism after a long friendship with the sisters at the Glenmary Mission in Vanceburg. Many Appalachians tended to embrace the more emotional aspects of religious worship. Pentecostal/Holiness groups and evangelical churches promote monotheism, salvation, and fundamentalism. Charismatic ministers gave “fire and brimstone” sermons that carried warnings of the punishment of hell and dire consequences if sinners refused to repent. This stern rhetoric is captured in several drawings.

In *Far Bramton (Fire and Brimstone)*, *Where We’ll Go*, the artist literally showers the farm landscape with fire and brimstone, eclipsing the land and subsequently killing the people. The image presented in Kinney’s painting, *Devil Burning Wicked*, where Satan lances his victims with a pitchfork, is a common theme in Appalachian country folk’s interpretation of Biblical scripture. Sinners unable or unwilling to find salvation are doomed to a fiery end. Kinney portrays the devil as a fearful, dark, hairy wild man who stands out against a light-rayed yellow background, from which he pitches bodies, into a red, fiery pit.

*Charley Comes Home from the Hospital* is an autobiographical work that recalls one admission to a local hospital for cardiac disease. Automobiles are parked around the hospital. Perhaps this illustrates the time when an impetuous Charley Kinney left the hospital in his gown one evening, deciding to “walk” home, some twenty miles away.

Charley Kinney generally painted in a flat style unconcerned with the rules of perspective and naturalistic modeling. Generalized lighting in his pictures lends equal importance to many forms on the pictorial surface. Size and placement of objects in the composition accentuate the narrative. Kinney often did a preliminary pencil sketch and then freely painted the surface; color application never took on a coloring book look. His use of color was bold and expressionistic. Yet, he favored an economy of line and color.
Far Bramton, Where We’ll Go, Charley Kinney, 1988, tempera and pencil, KFAC
Not solely a painter, as mentioned previously, Charley Kinney created an important small group of articulated puppets that were an intrinsic part of his fiddling performance. They were hung on a crossbar and animated from a foot pedal, and they moved rhythmically as his arms were engaged with fingering and bowing. The puppets showed Kinney’s mastery at reusing humble materials and magically transformed when he began fiddling. The result was a complex, total, artistically expressive performance.
Animals, Charley Kinney, 1985, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, KFAC
Noah Kinney, who began to carve in 1960, primarily carved figures and animals. His most ambitious works are a life-sized band and other human figures clothed in recycled garments including his wife’s wedding dress. They have a stoic reserve and angular, dignified presence. His carvings of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and Theodore Roosevelt, respectful homages to three personal heroes, reflect his patriotism.

Noah Kinney’s animal carvings included cats, lions, tigers, snapping turtles, foxes, and opossums. He fashioned a Model T Ford and farm vehicles as well, some a testament to earlier technological change that came slowly to the isolated mountain community.

Noah Kinney’s replica of a log cabin, his parent’s first home together and his brother Charley’s birthplace, had personal meaning for the artist, but the carving has broader meaning as well. The log cabin is a vernacular architectural structure most closely identified with Appalachian life. Though thought to be American, it is European in origin. Kinney’s log cabin is a faithful rendition of V notch construction, one of several common types.

Kinney’s carved steam driven portable Sawmill replica suggests the importance of logging in Appalachia and the exploitation of the rich forested resources of Appalachia by lumber barons. Noah Kinney respected selective harvesting of timber but was deeply critical of the raping of the land that caused irreparable damage.
Tractor, Noah Kinney, 1970s, painted wood, 11¾ x 11¾ x 18, KFAC

Cat, Noah Kinney, date unknown, painted wood and bristles, 10½ x 14½ x 7½, collection of Barbara Rose & Ed Okun
Horse and Buggy, Noah Kinney, 1970s, painted wood, wire, and leather, 11 x 24 x 7, KFAC, gift from Richard Edgeworth
Lion, Noah Kinney, late 1980s, painted wood and wood shavings, 16 x 27 x 11¼, collection of Bill Glennon
Hazel Bateman Kinney, Noah’s wife, was born in Mason County and grew up in Roberson County in a Methodist farming family. She completed eighth grade as did Noah and became interested in art in the 1980s, following Noah and Charley’s example. Her paintings of animals and pets and the routines of daily farm life show sensitivity and humor. She also painted narratives based on the Old Testament, with many examples of the Garden of Eden personalized with colorful butterflies, Noah’s Ark, and Moses crossing the Red Sea. Unable to paint at the present time, she lives in an assisted living facility in Flemingsburg.

As folklorist/author Bill Ferris noted in *Local Color*, American artists are identified with place. The Kinney family, as noted artists Minnie Adkins, Hugo Sperger, Tim Lewis, Linville Barker, and earlier Edgar Tolson, have and had deep ties to East Kentucky. The work of American self-taught artists has often revolved around histories and memories of place. Mario Sanchez created carved polychromed reliefs of his Cuban-American community in an enclave in Key West, Florida for more than fifty years. Clementine Hunter recorded life at Melrose Plantation in Natchitoches, Louisiana, where she lived and worked for more than a half century. Grandma Moses of Eagle Bridge, New York documented farm life and the changing seasons in anecdotal paintings executed over a period of two decades.

While a personal vision and a sense of place shaped the awareness and identity of each of them, the art of Charley, Noah, and Hazel Kinney transcends each one’s personal history, communicating universal human values. One cannot help but react to the Kinneys’ self-sufficiency, ingenuity, humor, sense of community, wisdom, imagination, and talent, all put to good use. Their uniquely expressed artworks, including several twentieth century masterpieces, offer relevant messages for a local, regional, national and global audience.

--Lee Kogan
New York, NY
April, 2006

*Tiger*, Hazel Kinney, 2002, markers and ink, 22 x 28, collection of Dick & Maggie Wenstrup
Endnotes
2 Ibid
3 Charley Kinney interview with Adrian Swain, 1990. “Local Voices,” video
4 Ibid
6 Ibid
8 Dale Travis, Covered Bridges in Kentucky, Feb. 6 2006. Kentucky Covered Bridge Association http://www.dalejtravis.com/cbky.htm
9 http://www.uky.edu/KentuckyAtlas/CoveredBridges/goddard.html
10 Tresia Swain, telephone interview, March 16, 2006
11 Hazel Kinney, telephone interview, March 20, 2006
13 “Hindenburg Burns in Lakehurst Crash: 21 Known Dead, 12 Missing, 64 Escape.” New York Times, May 7, 1937, pp 1,1,2
14 Adrian Swain, March 16, 2006
15 Southeastern Cooperative Wildlife Disease Study SCWDS Briefs report Rattlesnake and Hawk Duel Death, April 1989 5.1 pdf www.uga.edu/scwds/topic
16 http://bibleresources.bible.com
17 Matt Collinsworth, telephone interview, April 13, 2006
18 Adrian Swain, telephone interview January 11, 2006
19 Adrian Swain, e-mail March 17, 2006 carried text of three stories about haints and knocking spirits shared by Matt Collinsworth, Director, Kentucky Folk Art Center. The first two told to him by his grandmother and the third, also when he was very young, by an elderly retiree working as a substitute teacher
20 See also Charles Edwin Price, Haints, Witches and Boogers/Tales from Upper East Tennessee (Winston Salem, N.C., John F. Blair, 1992)
21 There are many biblical references to fire and sulfur (brimstone). Among them Genesis 19; Deuteronomy 29; Isaiah 30; Ezekial 38; Psalm 11; Revelations 19-21
22 See also Isaiah 47:14; Matthew 41:10; Revelations 20:10
23 Adrian Swain, February 20, 2006
24 Hazel Kinney, March 20, 2006
25 Rehder, pp 75-76
26 Rehder, pp 86-88, 320
27 Rehder, p 77
28 Rehder, pp 173-179

Garden of Eden, Hazel Kinney, 1993, 14 x 22, oil pastels and ink, KFAC
The old barn leans in just about equal proportion to the fences, the gates, the sheds, the old house, and even the people who live here, Charlie and Noah Kinney, and Noah’s wife, Hazel. Past the barn and the garden, a tiny shed crowded with Noah’s wood carvings: an ensemble of life-sized female musicians with guitar, mandolin, Dobro, and fiddle; a miniature old-time threshing machine; a fire engine; a horse-and-buggy; and a mule pulling a plow. The front porch of Noah’s and Hazel’s house is piled with rocks and lumps of coal that Hazel, not to be outdone, has painted with faces, flowers, and forests. Charlie’s shanty across the creek is littered with strips of hickory bark he uses to make garden baskets. The old house the brothers were born in is now inhabited only by Charlie’s puppets, bizarre creations assembled from rags, aluminum foil, and bits of junk that hang from the end of a tobacco stick and dance while Charlie fiddles. The stripping room and barn display Charlie’s paintings: crayon, house paint, and acrylic on window shades and poster board. No farming has gone on here for a long time. The gate beside the barn keeps nothing in and nothing out. As visitors arrive and enter the yard, the last one through is left to figure out how to stand it back up and get it to stay. To pass through that gate is to enter another world.

For years neighbors and visitors have entered this world, struggled comically to replace the impossible gate, and settled themselves in the barn on apple crates and old car seats for a Saturday night round of music. Nearly everyone here is a “musicianer” of some kind or a dancer, but the fiddle is the instrument of choice, and the pickers, dancers, and listeners align themselves around the circle of fiddlers like filings pointing to the pole of a magnet. “This is fiddle country,” Brooks Mineer explains. Indeed, few places in North America could provide such a collection of genuine old-time fiddlers from the same neighborhood as the head of Salt Lick in Lewis County, Kentucky.

Unlike the typical jam session today where fiddlers play familiar tunes all together, in the Kinneys’ barn one fiddle is passed around the circle and each fiddler plays and is heard individually. A guitar and sometimes a banjo, are likewise traded as the fiddle is passed, giving everyone the opportunity to second as well as lead.
Noah, Hazel, and Charley Kinney in front of barn, 1984, Hazel Kinney Archive
The order of performing is set by a custom long established among themselves—no one better to lead off than Brooks Mineer, who always claims he has to play first because he’s not even supposed to be here and has to leave early. When he plays his “Gray Eagle,” his fiddle held low on his left arm the old-fashioned way, his body swaying in counter-rhythm to the rolling of his bow, his eyes gleam and sparkle as he seems transported to another realm beyond this brief instant of time in the old barn.

“What? Play the ‘Gray Eagle’ AGIN?” he whines in mock disbelief. Gus didn’t have the tape recorder on, so Brooks will oblige, but with a condition: he will play it again if someone will dance. The plywood board is dragged out into the driveway and another instrument is added to the ensemble, its partner in evolution, the ancient rhythm of the feet. Now he plays for a longer time and puts a young lady through a real workout until at last, when one or both of them has finally had enough, they end with a flourish, bow strokes and feet together! Brooks protests he has already stayed too late: “I’m a dead man when I get home,” and passes the instrument to his brother-in-law, Bob Prater, the premier dance fiddler in Lewis County, and the music continues as different ones, from old men in overalls to adolescent girls in designer jeans, try out their steps on the plywood board.

The fiddlers are close observers and students of each other’s playing. Noah leans over to me and allows, “Bob’s got a keen cut with the bow, don’t he?” In fact, there is a similarity in the playing of all these fiddlers, owing to their having grown up and learned from a previous generation in the same place, an exaggerated emphasis on the bowing, artful, flamboyant and graceful, articulating difficult and complex phrases that most other fiddlers would not attempt. As we were learning, this was something that had to be seen as well as heard. It could not be learned from tapes or records.

And so it goes—the circle turns and the fiddle is passed. After Bob Prater, Clarence Rigdon takes the fiddler’s seat and plays beautiful and lively old tunes learned from his father, who learned them from men who came down the Ohio on the riverboats. Then Roger Cooper, a generation younger than the others, considered the heir to the local tradition, whose playing reflects the years he spent learning from the late Buddy Thomas, who, it is generally agreed, was the greatest of the Lewis County fiddlers. After Roger, Gus and I take our turns, feeling honored to get to play in such a company.
The evening wears on and now the fiddle is passed to Charlie, who being the oldest, always plays last. Noah seconds him on the guitar as only a brother can with runs that weave in and out of the tune like the shuttle through the shed of a loom. Charlie remarks that he can “catch a feller’s bow-hand” if he can study it a while, and I am relieved to know the reason for his unnerving stare as I was playing one of his tunes. Now he takes the fiddle and imitates first Gus’s, and then my style of bowing. We didn’t play at all alike, but Charlie had captured each of us perfectly. Over the years he had picked up tunes from us just as we had from him, and now here he is giving us his rendition of our renditions of his tune!

It is a vision I will never forget: Old Charlie with his legs crossed, sitting on a crate, the old felt hat partly hiding that inscrutable gaze, his right arm hanging loosely at his side while his bow hand draws curves in the air. As I watch and listen, I look at Charlie’s paintings tacked up on the inside of the old barn: hounds trailing a fox into a mountain sunset while a little girl stands peacefully fishing in a tiny pond; a man hauling dogs in a horse-drawn sled, the dogs with seeming dog-smiles sitting up on their hind legs enjoying the ride; and the one that speaks to me now across the years: a hawk’s eye view of this valley from the top of the mountain, with a hawk life-size on a limb in the foreground, and far below in the distance this same barn caught in this same instant: brush-strokes and bow-strokes, the signature patterns of our lives.

--John Harrod
Frankfort, KY
March, 2006
Lee Kogan serves as Director of the Folk Art Institute, the educational arm of the American Folk Art Museum in New York City, where she has been the Senior Research Fellow since 1987. Prior to assuming the directorship in 1993, she served for four years as Assistant Director of the Institute. She taught music in public and private schools in New Jersey from 1951 to 1983, and served as Assistant to the Director of the Folk Art Institute from 1983 to 1987. Since 1982 she has also served as Adjunct Assistant Professor at New York University. Ms. Kogan holds a Bachelor's degree in music from Queens College and a Masters degree in music teaching from Columbia University. She received a second Masters degree in Folk Art Studies in 1993 from New York University. Recently, Ms. Kogan served as Editor for the *Encyclopedia of American Folk Art*.

John Harrod, a native Kentuckian and former Rhodes Scholar, first learned old-time music from Darley Fulk, Bill Livers, Asa Martin and Lily May Ledford. In the 1980s he worked with Gus Meade and Mark Wilson to collect a large and influential body of field recordings of musicians around central and northeastern Kentucky. These can be heard on Rounder CD's *Fiddle Music of Kentucky and Kentucky Old-Time Banjo*. A new CD of John's field recordings, *Along the Ohio River*, is being issued in 2006. He has taught fiddle workshops at Appalshop, Berea College, and the Ed Haley Old-Time Fiddle Festival. John Harrod is among the most knowledgeable and well-researched experts on old-time and traditional Appalachian music in Kentucky. He retired from teaching high school in Frankfort, KY in May 2006.
## Exhibition Checklist

1. **Abraham Lincoln**, Charley Kinney, 1980s, tempera and pencil, 28 x 22, collection of Dick & Maggie Wenstrup
3. **Abraham Lincoln**, Noah Kinney, 1970s, painted wood, 13½ x 12½ x 10 (KFAC)
4. **Abraham Lincoln**, Charley Kinney, 1980s, tempera and pencil, 28 x 22, collection of Steve Jones
5. **Animals**, Charley Kinney, 1985, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
6. **Bears**, Charley Kinney, 1980s, paint and pencil, 18½ x 34½ (KFAC)
7. **Big Fish**, Charley Kinney, 1989, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
8. **Boy Fishing with his Dog**, Noah Kinney, 1925?, paint and ink, 8½ x 11½, collection of Dick & Maggie Wenstrup
9. **Cat**, Noah Kinney, 1985, painted wood and bristles, 11 x 17 x 7½ (KFAC)
10. **Cat**, Noah Kinney, date unknown, painted wood & bristles, 10½ x 14½ x 7½, collection of Barbara Rose and Ed Okun
11. **Cat’s Eye**, Charley Kinney, c1914?, pencil, 8¾ x 5¾ (KFAC)
12. **Charley Comes Home from Hospital**, Charley Kinney, 1990, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (1)
13. **Covered Bridge**, Charley Kinney, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, collection of Dick & Maggie Wenstrup
14. **Cut Cherry**, Charley Kinney, late 1980s, paint and pencil, 28 x 22, collection of Steve Jones
15. **Deer**, Charley Kinney, mid 1980s, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, collection of Steve Jones
17. **Devil Burning Wicked**, Charley Kinney, late 1980s, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, collection of Steve Jones
18. **Far Bramton, Where We’ll Go**, Charley Kinney, 1988, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
19. **Farmer and Cow**, Noah Kinney, 1980s, painted wood, 8 x 14 x 7 (1)
20. **Fire and Brimstone**, Charley Kinney, c1990, tempera and pencil, collection of Richard Edgeworth
21. **Fish**, Noah Kinney, 1980s, painted wood, 14 x 8½ x 3½ (1)
23. **Garden of Eden**, Hazel Kinney, 1993, oil pastels and ink, 14 x 22 (KFAC)
25. **George Washington, Noah Kinney, 1970s, wood, plaster, clothing, shoe string and buttons, 38 x 24 (KFAC)
26. **Giraffe**, Noah Kinney, late 1980s, painted wood and cardboard, 11 x 16 x 6½ (1)
27. **Going to the Mill**, Hazel Kinney, 1991, crayons and markers, 21½ x 23½ (KFAC)
29. **Grinding Corn**, Charley Kinney, c1990, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (1)
30. **Grist Mill**, Noah Kinney, 1970s, painted wood, vinyl and string, 14½ x 31 x 14 (1)
31. **Guinea Hen**, Noah Kinney, 1980s, painted wood, 12½ x 18 x 7 (1)
32. **Haint**, Charley Kinney, 1985, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
33. **Hawk and Rattlesnake**, Charley Kinney, 1988, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
34. **Haunted House**, Charley Kinney, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, collection of Barry Cohen
35. **Horse and Buggy**, Noah Kinney, 1970s, painted wood, wire and leather, 11 x 24 x 7 (1)
36. **Italy**, Charley Kinney, 1980s, tempera, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
37. **Kentucky Farm**, Noah Kinney, date unknown, paint on canvas, 10½ x 13½ (1)
38. **Lion**, Noah Kinney, late 1980s, painted wood, 16 x 27 x 11½, collection of Bill Glennon
39. **Lion**, Charley Kinney, date unknown, unidentified paint, 35½ x 69 (1)
40. **Lion**, Charley Kinney, 1950s, unidentified paint and pencil, 19 x 35 (KFAC)
41. **Lion**, Charley Kinney, date unknown, house paint and tempera, 22 x 28 (1)
42. **Lion and Rabbit**, Charley Kinney, date unknown, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, collection of Audrey Heckler
43. **Memories of the Kinney Home Place**, Hazel Kinney, c1988, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (1)
44. **Men Voting, No Women**, Charley Kinney, 1989, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
45. **Model T Ford**, Noah Kinney, 1970s, wood, paper and paint, 8½ x 13 x 7 (1)
46. **Moonshine Still**, Charley Kinney, 1984, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
47. **Moses Crossing the Red Sea**, Hazel Kinney, 1992, markers, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
48. **Mother and Child**, Noah Kinney, 1980s, painted wood, 14½ x 4½ x 4½ (1)
49. **Mountain Lion**, Charley Kinney, 1989, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
50. **Niagara Falls**, Charley Kinney, 1987, tempera, 22 x 28 (2)
51. **Noah’s Ark**, Hazel Kinney, 1992, paint on plywood, 24 x 28, collection of Dick & Maggie Wenstrup
52. **Old Fishten Brig**, Charley Kinney, 1988, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, collection of Matthew J. Arient
53. **Old Hanted House**, Charley Kinney, 1988, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, Arient Family Collection
54. Pak Peddler, Charley Kinney, 1984, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
55. Pickin Cherys, Charley Kinney, 1988, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
56. Possum, Noah Kinney, 1988, painted wood, 6½ x 25 x 6, Arient Family Collection
57. Rattlesnake, Noah Kinney, 1980s, painted wood, 2 x 28 x 2¼ (1)
58. Red Fox, Noah Kinney, 1988, painted wood, 12 x 26 x 3, Arient Family Collection
59. Rooster, Noah Kinney, 1980s, painted wood, 15 x 13 4½ (1)
60. Santa Claus, Charley Kinney, 1986, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (4)
62. School Marm, Noah Kinney, 1980s, wood, paint and clothing, 46 x 16 x 24, collection of George & Sue Viener
63. Snapping Turtle, Noah Kinney, 1989, painted wood, 3½ x 15 x 1 ½ (4)
64. Square Dance, Charley Kinney, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, tempera and pencil, collection of Steve Jones
65. Statue of Liberty, Hazel Kinney, c. 1992, tempera, 28 x 22 (1)
66. Teddy Roosevelt, Noah Kinney, 1970s, painted wood, 12½ x 9½ x 7¼ (KFAC)
67. Three Types of Skunk, Noah Kinney, painted wood, 32 x 26 x 6, collection of Dick & Maggie Wenstrup
68. Tiger, Charley Kinney, 1980s, tempera and pencil, 32 x 40, collection of Steve Jones
69. Tiger, Noah Kinney, 1987, painted wood and wood shavings, 15 x 37 x 8 (KFAC)
70. Tiger, Noah Kinney, late 1980s, painted wood, 21 x 30 x 8 (1)
72. Tornado, Charley Kinney, 1980s, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, collection of Barbara Rose and Ed Okun
73. Tornado, Charley Kinney, c. 1990, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (1)
74. Tractor, Noah Kinney, 1970s, painted wood and wire, 11⅜ x 11⅜ x 18 (KFAC)
75. Walking Stick, Noah Kinney, 1980s, painted wood, 35 x 2 x 7¼ (1)
76. Wedding, Charley Kinney, 1989, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, collection of Barry Cohen
77. White Tiger, Noah Kinney, late 1980s, painted wood and wood shavings, 15½ x 26 x 11¼ (1)
78. Who Look Snak Never Die, Charley Kinney, 1990, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (3)
79. Wild Animal Kills, Charley Kinney, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, collection of Barry Cohen
80. Wild Booger, Charley Kinney, 1987, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
81. Wild Cat, Charley Kinney, 1989, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
82. Wild Hogs, Charley Kinney, 1985, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28 (KFAC)
83. Woman with Churn, Noah Kinney, 1980s, painted wood, 11½ x 9 x 5 (1)
84. Woman with Cow and Calf, Noah Kinney, 1970s, painted wood, 11 x 15 x 12 (KFAC)
85. Zeppelin, Charley Kinney, date unknown, tempera and pencil, 22 x 28, collection of Jeff and Jennifer Grosman

Lenders of individual works of art are detailed above. In addition:
(KFAC) = KFAC permanent collection
(1) = KFAC, gift from Richard Edgeworth, 2006
(2) = KFAC, gift from Jessie Cooper, 1991
(3) = KFAC, gift from the Arient Family, 1994
(4) = KFAC, gift from Sara Aldridge and Joanne Lammers, 1992

Noah Kinney in his workshop. Photo: Talis Bergmanis, 1989

Charley Paints the Devil

i.
Charley paints the devil
because he knows its face
and the dark hand that cleft
his narrow chest.

Hell burns
pink and yellow. Sinners
like you and I and Charley
are cast like pitch to the flame.

But on the spring hill, dogwoods
blossom like ghosts, and God
moves time like a fiddle bow
while Charley paints the devil.

ii.
Charley made his woman to dance
for friends and strangers gathered
round the sunny barn. His bow draws
out some old tune from ragged strings.
His foot taps and rolls the peddle,
and her loose limbs, all wood and wire,
set a freakish gait. She clogs
in his rhythm across the board,
making the children point and laugh.

But some hard nights when the world
flames like hell beyond the ridge
and sleep limps away, a wounded beast,
Charley takes down the fiddle and brings
her out by moonlight, and with he
in his bedclothes and she in her red dress
(always the red dress), he makes her
dance for him and him alone.

iii.
Charley knows the world
is strange and fearsome.
Though we set about
to kill all that we have left,
we exist yet by some unknowable
grace in the shadow of sure destruction.
Beasts, seen and unseen, cast wildly
about in the night. Death gathers
like a storm in the white summer sky,
and judgment comes too soon, too soon.
So Charley dreams in colors and fiddle tunes
and stares the coiled snake in its eye.

--Matt Collinsworth
Morehead, KY
April, 2006
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