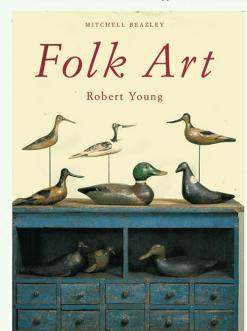


IT is perhaps not surprising that in our increasingly matt-black, high-definition, digital age, the low-tech, unslick and unsophisticated should be going through a revival. Folk art, as the functional, everyday objects and images of years past are known today, is celebrated and examined in a new book by the London dealer and collector Robert Young (Folk Art, Mitchell Beazley, £25). Although we now delight in the naïvety and rustic charm of weathervanes, animal portraits and decoy ducks, the evidence before us here is that their makers may not have been the untutored sons of soil we romantically imagine them to be. The wit, confidence and technical skill that shine from such pieces as the late-19th-century French squirrel house (above) show them to be products of a refined aesthetic sense that flourished away from the more self-conscious modernity of the cities. This book is handsome, thorough and unpatronising; a treasury of love spoons and pictures of really big pigs. PC

## Folk Art (Mitchell Beazley, £25), Robert Young

An engagement with the object not the maker safeguards *Folk Art* from romanticism or sentiment. At the same time, the origins, evolution and historical context of categories of object are examined thoroughly. Authoritative and beguiling, it is concerned with the 'vernacular art of different European countries', notably western and northern European rural communities. Objects illustrated – from furniture to weather vanes, backgammon boards



to samplers – represent 'the unselfconscious creativity of academically untrained artists and craftsmen', and illustrate points of coincidence in European folk art, and of divergence –Norwegian birch-root baskets; French metal bottle carriers; and the weather houses of Germany's Black Forest. H&G readers can buy Folk Art for the special price of £22 (inc p&p) by calling 01933-443863 and quoting the reference W349 □

## COUNTRY LIFE





