

## A Craftsman by Choice

BY TOM LEECH



**A man of many hats and talents,** Gustave Baumann paints the original and now familiar quote above the doors of the Museum of International Folk Art. 1953, photographer unknown. Courtesy of the Ann Baumann Trust.

**T**he man standing on a ladder is seventy-two year old Gustave Baumann, pictured here lettering founder Florence Dibell Bartlett's words above the doors of the Museum of International Folk Art just prior to its opening in 1953: THE ART OF THE CRAFTSMAN IS A BOND BETWEEN THE PEOPLES OF THE WORLD. The photograph is from a collection of Baumann snapshots in a promised gift to the Palace of the Governors Photo Archives from the Ann Baumann Trust.

While Baumann is best known for vivid color woodcut scenes of New Mexico and for his popular marionette performances, he was also a frequent and enthusiastic supporter of worthy causes. His many other skills and talents kept him perpetually involved in local life, and his craftsmanship remains with us in his carved reredos at the Church of the Holy Faith, his restoration of La Conquistadora, his collaboration with Will Shuster on the first Zozobra, and in decorations for the Albuquerque Public Library and Los Poblanos historic property.

To celebrate the spirit of the man on the ladder, who once said "I am a craftsman by choice and an artist by accident," the New Mexico History Museum and the New Mexico Museum of Art will jointly host *A Gathering for Gus*, a symposium commemorating the 100th anniversary of Baumann's arrival in New Mexico, on September 28 and 29. Tickets for the event may be purchased through [ticketssantafe.org](http://ticketssantafe.org).

As for the words above the door, they have resonated with me since I first read them. Today the wall is painted blue, and the letters have been replaced with dimensional metal letters, but I know they have meaning for others as well. In 2012 I used the quote in a talk I gave in Istanbul, and when translated into Turkish my speech was interrupted with rousing applause. In these worrisome times, I would like to think that they hold out as much hope and are as true as ever. ■

**Tom Leech** is director of the Palace Press.