

# ALABAMAARTS

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**On the Cover:** Watercolor by Dana Brown, "Train Yard" 15 1/2" x 29 1/2". Dana lives in Huntsville, Alabama where she has studied privately with watercolor artist and instructor Chuck Long and attended classes at Arrowmont Arts and Crafts School in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. She's exhibited and won awards in shows nationwide. Brown is a signature member of the Watercolor Society of Alabama and a member of several other watercolor and art groups as well.



"What drew me out of the car, across the parking lot and through the weeds to an old, abandoned train car? It wasn't the bright-red caboose under the pines against a sea of blue sky. No, it was the light across a rusty wheel and the loose chain dangling onto the tracks. Someone else needs to paint the beautiful sky, I thought. I have to paint the wheel.

"Artists are constantly looking for interesting scenes and analyzing why one image is more appealing than another. What forces you to take notice? Your eyes dart over to examine a flash of color or a strong shape. It's important to ask the question, 'What is it I feel compelled to paint?'

"Sometimes more is revealed by focusing on a small segment of the subject than by painting a traditional view. Developing your power of observation and searching for that 'kernel,' that point of interest, can be the key to a strong painting. It's also pivotal in the search to find your own unique voice."

Dana Brown

# *Alabama's Council on the Arts*

## Mission Statement

The mission of the Alabama State Council on the Arts is to promote Alabama's diverse and rich artistic resources while highlighting excellence and educational experiences.

## The Agency

The Alabama State Council on the Arts is the official state agency for the support and development of the arts in Alabama. It was established in 1966 by an act of the Alabama Legislature. The agency supports not-for-profit arts organizations, programming in the arts for the general public, and individual artists. The State Arts Council works to expand the state's cultural resources and preserve its unique cultural heritage and places a high priority on arts programming by and for schools. The Council's primary means of supporting the arts and making the arts more accessible to varied audiences is through a multi-faceted grants program which covers all disciplines and fields of creative expression.

## The Council

The fifteen members of the Council are drawn from communities throughout the state. They are appointed by the Governor for six-year terms, and selection is based on expertise in the arts, business, or community affairs. The officers of the Council are elected by its members.

The Council meets four times each year, at various locations throughout the state. It approves agency programs and policies, develops long range plans, and makes final decisions on state and federal grant dollars under its jurisdiction.

# ECONOMIC IMPACT of the Arts

by Al Head

The Alabama State Council on the Arts has recently completed and published an updated long range plan entitled, *The Arts in Alabama: A New Millennium*. The multi-year plan addresses the issue of quality of life in the state from various perspectives. The economy, economic development, and related areas such as industrial recruitment, cultural tourism, and community revitalization are all prominent in the text of the plan. The point is made about business support being critical to the health of the arts and, in turn, the arts contributing to an environment in which business will flourish. Recent studies by the National Governors Association, the Southern Legislative Conference and the Southern Growth Policies Board address the economic impact of the arts and the interconnectedness of the arts and business. The results, across the board, point to the arts as having a significant impact.

The arts as associated to quality of life are commonly experienced and observed in our rapidly changing popular culture, diverse creative expression, preservation of cultural traditions, elevated forms of communication and, as our forefathers put it, “the pursuit of happiness”. The arts are all of those things, but there is a broader story to the role of the arts in our society. The arts also impact employment, make cities more attractive and livable, generate tax revenue, help property value appreciate, stimulate tourism, contribute to a more enlightened and competent workforce and facilitate improved social and professional relations among diverse populations. The arts are good business.

The late Winton M. Blount, a nationally recognized business leader and arts patron, often said, “for me, business support for the arts is a matter of enlightened self-interest.” In 1995, when Congress was debating abolishing the National Endowment for the Arts, Blount, a self-ascribed conservative Republican, was asked to be the keynote speaker at the Nancy Hanks Lecture Series and address the issue of federal support

for the arts. Emphasized in his comments was, among other things, the importance of the partnership between the public and private sectors in supporting the arts and how funding should be viewed as an investment, not a gift or act of benevolence. Winton Blount died in October 2002: part of his legacy will, no doubt, be the tangible evidence of how the arts, quality of life, business and economic vitality are interconnected and mutually beneficial. His signature act of patronage, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival in Montgomery, has an annual economic impact of over 11.6 million dollars.

In this issue of *AlabamaArts*, articles are presented that highlight the economic impact of the arts in our state. From Wayne Flynt’s historical cultural perspective to more contemporary examples of arts impact, the stories are consistent illustrations about how the arts can play an important role in moving our state forward economically and culturally. Like other resources in Alabama, the arts need to be nourished, wisely utilized and made part of our overall plans for the future. Incorporating the arts as part of public policy and business investment is no longer “cutting edge” strategy for growth and progress. The evidence regarding the benefits of the arts is well documented and articulated. It’s time for public officials and business leaders in Alabama to make supporting the arts part of their priorities for the future. ■

*Al Head is the  
Executive Director  
of the Alabama State  
Council on the Arts.*



# HUNTSVILLE

## as a Case Study from the forthcoming book, *Alabama in the Twentieth Century*

by Wayne Flynt

In Alabama's desperate century-long effort to recruit business and industry, culture has always played a role. The old economy of extractive, low-wage industry relied on a labor force profoundly shaped by folk culture: story-telling, traditional country music, herb and patent medicine.

The new economy relied upon a different kind of culture. Many of the new businesses of the late 20th century depended on skilled, well-educated, high-tech employees who had to be recruited from other states or even outside the region. Attracting human resources—engineers, mathematicians, computer programmers, scientists—for the new economy gave Alabama industrial recruiters a decades long headache. The newcomers often judged society and culture by the quality of schools, art galleries, museums, the availability of classical music, ballet, the presence of environmentally friendly policies, and tolerance and acceptance of non-native Alabamians with diverse life styles and religious preferences.

One Sun Belt historian noted that not all of the South participated in the 1970's-1980's economic boom. Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, and to a degree, Tennessee, remained outside the magic circle. Alabama failed to gain recognition as a full-fledged Sun Belt success story but

not because it lacked the elements necessary for such designation. Rather, it was due to haphazard and piecemeal development. Largely without leadership from state officials or the Alabama Development Office, local visionaries took matters into their own hands. The result was pockets of educational excellence and economic prosperity surrounded by a vast landscape of collapsing industries, terrible schools, and human deprivation. Chief among the economic winners was the city of Huntsville.

Huntsville emerged from World War II a different city standing at an historic crossroads. Looking to the past, there was a legacy as one of the largest cotton markets east of the Mississippi River with three large cotton mills still operating. Redstone and Huntsville arsenals presented a much different future, using cheap TVA hydroelectric power and the Appalachian region's vast surplus population to attract a new kind of industry.

Few local leaders envisioned what that future would be like. The evidence for Huntsville's high-tech future was not encouraging. At the end of the war, research scientists were five times more numerous in other regions of the United States than in the South. Patents were issued to southerners at a rate less than one-third the national average. Alabama had little to offer high-tech

companies that relied on good research universities, a highly skilled technical work force, clean environment, efficient, professional government, and cultural opportunities. The question posed for Madison County was whether a high-tech city was possible within a low-tech state. Over the next half century, Huntsville answered the question with resounding affirmation.

The critical decision came early. In the fall of 1949, Wernher von Braun led a small group of fellow rocket engineers on a site selection visit to Huntsville. They found Redstone Arsenal, the Tennessee River, the lush



*Wernher von Braun was one of the world's first and foremost rocket engineers and a leading authority on space travel. Living in Huntsville, Alabama from 1950 to 1970, Dr. von Braun first directed the technical development of the U.S. Army's ballistic missile program at Redstone Arsenal, and later served as Director of NASA's Marshall Space Flight Center.*

*The newcomers often judged society and culture by the quality of schools, art galleries, museums, the availability of classical music, ballet, the presence of environmentally friendly policies, and tolerance and acceptance of non-native Alabamians with diverse life styles and religious preferences.*

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*A member of the Huntsville Symphony warming up for a performance.*

valley and high mountains much to their liking. Of course, most anything would have been better than the dry, flat terrain at Fort Bliss, near El Paso, Texas, where, after their surrender to the allies in 1945, the scientists had worked on V-2 rockets under close military supervision.

Von Braun soon returned to Huntsville with some 120 German scientists and engineers to begin work at the newly renamed Redstone Arsenal Ordnance Rocket Center. In their new city, they lived where they wanted, bought houses, and joined and formed organizations. They obtained library cards, started St. Mark's Lutheran Church, founded classical musical ensembles including the Huntsville Symphony Orchestra and the Huntsville Community Chorus, the Broadway Theatre League, the Arts Council, the German Club for international travel, and the University of Alabama at Huntsville. Most native Alabamians were too hospitable and delighted about the economic stimulus brought by the newcomers to ask troubling questions about previous Nazi connections, V-2 rocket attacks on London, or the deaths of thousands of Russian, French, and Polish POWs while building German rocket facilities.

In 1956, at the height of the Cold War, the U.S. Army established the Army Ballistic Missile Agency at Redstone and directed the scientists toward military applications and away from von Braun's lifelong interest in space rocketry. Four years later, he traded his military status for civilian control when the George C. Marshall Space Flight Center began operations with von Braun as director of Huntsville's rocket engine component. Von Braun became responsible for



*A recent performance of the Huntsville Ballet.*



*Performers in a touring Broadway production take the stage in the Von Braun Center's concert hall in Huntsville, Alabama.*

Huntsville Convention & Visitors Bureau Photo

planning, directing, and conducting the nation's non-military space activities.

Development of Redstone, Jupiter, and Saturn launch vehicles pumped billions of dollars into the local economy. And the success of Redstone and Saturn rockets that blasted Alan Shepard into the heavens and placed American astronauts on the moon restored the nation's confidence after a brief Soviet lead in space achievements. The Marshall facility, dedicated in 1960, cost \$100 million. Two years later, NASA's Marshall facility employees spent that much more in Huntsville's local businesses. In 1964, the Marshall Space Flight Center's budget soared to \$1.7 billion. At that time, Huntsville derived 90 percent of its income from the aerospace industry.

Trading one dominant industry (textiles) for another (aerospace) had its own risks. After the 1960's Apollo astronaut landings, NASA began cut backs as government funds were redirected toward the war in Vietnam. In the decade after 1965, Huntsville lost more than 17,000 NASA-related jobs and the city faced another economic crisis. Fortunately, what the city still possessed were the excellent schools and cultural resources that were the legacy of Alabama's initial flirtation with the nation's new economy.

Business, civic, and political leaders mobilized to save the commercial and residential neighborhoods that were sprouting "For Sale" signs like spring mushrooms. Unlike Jefferson County, where competing communities vied for new industry, Madison County formulated a coordinated development



*1959 Capec Rocket from the photo archive of the Army Ballistic Missile Agency at Redstone Arsenal.*

strategy involving civic, cultural, and academic leaders as well as Chamber of Commerce officials. The effort paid off in a flurry of new light industry (tires, chemicals, machinery, metals) as well as other high-tech firms not involved with aerospace. Between 1965 and 1978, Huntsville generated 14,000 new non-NASA industrial jobs and emerged with a much more diversified economy.

The election of Ronald Reagan as president and his "Star Wars" defense initiative, designed to topple the Soviet Union by spending so much on technology that the "evil empire" would overextend its economy, paid huge dividends to Huntsville. The city received the fifth largest concentration of "Star Wars" contracts of any in the United States; between 1983 and 1986, contracts worth \$528 million went to 58 area laboratories, schools, and companies. Although more government funding went to Los Angeles and Boston, the size of those cities diffused the impact. Marshall also became host to the \$8 billion manned space station project during this time.

The result was a second phase aerospace boom similar to the early 1960's.

Local planners, projecting a doubling of the city's population, began a massive highway program and an interstate connector to I-65 near Decatur, which former Governor George Wallace had refused to build because Madison County had always voted against him.

By 1983, almost one-fifth of Madison County jobs were in high-tech firms, giving Huntsville one of the nation's most technologically sophisticated work forces, which, in turn, generated \$1 billion in payrolls. Although Alabama did not qualify as one of the nation's 24 states with significant high-tech employment, Huntsville had one of the highest concentrations of engineers (35 percent of the state's total), science technicians, mathematical and computer specialists, and natural scientists of any American city. Indeed, it compared favorably with Austin, Orlando, and North Carolina's research triangle in high-tech industries, which had accounted for 75 percent of U.S. manufacturing job growth in the United States between 1955 and 1979.

Success bred success. Drawn by the highest salaries and population growth of any Alabama metropolitan area, Harbert Construction began a \$60 million office park in 1985. The city's Space Center became the state's second most popular tourist attraction, and, in 1999, home to the National Space Science and Technology Center. Boeing, already with a presence in Huntsville, announced, in 1997, a \$400 million rocket-building plant a few miles away toward Decatur. At the turn of the last

century, Toyota chose Huntsville as the site of its new engine plant.

Much of this progress resulted from economic and city planning, a concept that many Alabamians found vaguely sinister. It was Wernher von Braun who first envisioned the idea of a research park and Joe Moquin, CEO of Teledyne-Brown Engineering, who implemented it. Moquin was not impressed with the renovated cotton mill that served as his company's first home. Familiar with North Carolina's research triangle, he requested that the city zone 1,000 acres for research and redevelopment. City planners were even more expansive, buying an additional 2,000 acres of former cotton fields to augment Moquin's request. The result was Cummings Research Park, second worldwide in actual developed land to the Research Triangle Park and fourth in employment. Cummings became home to a mix of local and Fortune 500 companies as well as to the University of Alabama at Huntsville and the state's supercomputer. In 2001, Cummings provided Huntsville a payroll of \$2 billion, earned employees an average annual salary above \$50,000, and drove local annual salaries to a southern average second only to Atlanta.

By the end of century, Huntsville's saga had become a national success story. A 1998 study listed Huntsville as the southeast city with the highest concentration of high-tech workers. In 2000, a trade organization named it the fifth top center for software employment behind Boulder, Colorado, San Jose, California (Silicon Valley),



Huntsville Convention & Visitors Bureau Photo

Visitors at the U.S. Space and Rocket Center look upward at rockets developed in Huntsville, Alabama to launch satellites and astronauts.

Washington, D.C., and North Carolina's research triangle. In 2001, the January issue of *Expansion Management* listed Huntsville as third among its top twenty-five high-tech cities, and *Newsweek* magazine named it one of the nation's "Top 10 Techno Cities."

But the price for all this prosperity was too high for other Alabama communities. The funds for high quality public schools drove local property taxes to heights unacceptable to citizens in other cities and even generated a taxpayer backlash in Huntsville. Much of the city's population – 44 percent by 1990 – came from outside Alabama. By comparison, only 20 percent of the population of Jefferson and Shelby counties was born outside the state. As the least southern-born and bred, Madison County had to adjust to new ways of doing things, not a pleasant thought for many of the state's citizens. Rigorous planning and zoning assumed that some sort of coordinated effort took precedence over individual preference. Even the

state's fastest metropolitan growth turned off some. A local mythology reported that one frustrated 1960's Huntsville mayor grouched that many old time citizens wondered why so much change had to occur. All they wanted was buttermilk and cornbread, not a bush to be moved or tree cut.

To Alabama's development gurus, the mayor's pique was a familiar refrain. After all, not everyone appreciates Mozart or Renoir. But Huntsville's saga proved that a new economy rode piggy-back on a new culture. The cultural amenities we may not appreciate ourselves, we must sometimes provide for others whom we desire to attract to live among us. ■

*Wayne Flynt is an acclaimed historian, social activist, dedicated scholar, researcher, and a sought-after lecturer. His many works have explored the plight of poor whites in the South and the history of southern region and politics. His mission is to raise the level of consciousness about problems facing the State—a State he loves even though he believes it needs major reform.*

*Flynt is the author of ten books, and his writings often grace the pages of the state's newspapers. He is also a sought-after speaker, but he is not noted for pulling his punches, whether he is speaking to a local Rotary Club or before members of the Legislature.*

# THE OFFICIAL SPONSOR:

## Partnerships Between Business and the Arts

by Georgine Clarke

### *“To give back to the community”*

is a phrase used often by businesses when asked why they support arts activities—programs ranging from museum exhibitions to festivals to symphony concerts.

One side of that story is that the arts help provide “quality of life”—dynamic, creative communities that can attract new corporations and contribute to economic growth. The other side is that a successful business, in turn, sees the opportunity to contribute back to its neighbors with financial support making quality art accessible to a wide range of people.

The late Wynton M. “Red” Blount founded Blount International, a New

York Stock Exchange international manufacturing company headquartered in Montgomery, Alabama, with operations and distribution in more than 130 countries around the globe. He also built a \$21.5 million theatre in Montgomery for the Alabama Shakespeare Festival and helped a wide range of other arts organizations. He said, “It takes commitment—a personal interest and involvement—to successfully build a long-term partnership with the arts. As business leaders, it is imperative that we lead the way. From small businesses to large businesses, each can contribute in some way to the overall development that will pay enormous dividends, both economically and culturally. If you want a city that will be remembered long after you are gone, make the arts an integral part of the long-term strategic plan for growth.”

The Business Committee for the Arts, Inc. a national not-for-profit organization founded in 1967, conducts regular surveys to determine the level and trends in business support to the arts in the United States. Nationally, among companies with annual revenues of more than \$1 million, the survey reports that in 2001 the total dollar amount contributed to the arts was \$1.56 billion, representing a median contribution to the arts per business of \$4,000.

The reasons for such support? 65% said, “Good thing to do;” 35% said, “Tied to business goals.” In a brochure produced by the Montgomery Area Business Committee for the Arts, Inc., Jake Aronov of Aronov Realty Management Company brings the two ideas together. “Larger businesses, along with smaller ones, succeed only to the extent that they make life better for



*The Alabama Shakespeare Festival, Montgomery, Alabama.*

Photo by Phil Scarbrook

their customers, so it is an easy extension of that purpose to make our community better through investment in and support of the arts.”

Another way of phrasing, from a brochure produced by the Louisiana Division of the Arts:

THE HOUSE THAT ART BUILT

*This is the new truck,  
bought by the man  
who owns the store  
where the mommy shopped  
for the pink ballet slippers  
that made the little girl smile  
when she danced in  
the house that art built.*

Business support for the arts generally comes from several departments in the corporate budget. The International Events Group (IEG), headquartered in Chicago, defines a philanthropic donation, (“Good thing to do”), the most common relationship, as one considered support of a cause without any commercial incentive.

IEG further suggests that sponsorship support (“Tied to business goals”) is generally undertaken to assist with commercial objectives and comes from marketing, advertising or community relations budgets. Corporate sponsorship is one of the fastest growing areas of partnership between business and the arts today, with a 1999 figure of \$460 million in arts sponsorship by businesses in North America. Maximizing corporate marketing goals

## National Survey of Business Support to the Arts

Companies with annual revenues of more than \$1 million contributing to the arts

ALLOCATION OF BUSINESS CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE ARTS	TOTAL
Museums	22%
Symphony Orchestras	19%
Arts Education Programs	17%
Theatre	11%
Other Music	8%
Public Radio and Television	5%
Dance	4%
Performing Arts Facilities	3%
Literary Arts	3%
Opera	3%
United Arts Funds	2%

REASONS FOR BUSINESS SUPPORT OF THE ARTS	TOTAL
The arts in the K-12 curricula increase academic performance and SAT scores	41%
The arts have a proven positive impact on the local economy and tourism	31%
The arts help address social issues in and out of the workplace	21%
Attendance for arts performances and events surpasses attendance for professional sports events	19%
The arts in and out of the workplace help attract and retain employees	14%

*Percent identifying each as a “very important” reason for their company’s support of the arts*

ARTS INVOLVEMENT TIED TO BUSINESS	TOTAL
Offers networking opportunities and the potential to develop new business	22%
Can stimulate creative thinking, problem-solving and team building	74%
Offers special benefits for employees	64%
Can help to recruit and retain employees	57%
Has the potential to increase its bottom line	52%

*Percent who “agree strongly” or “agree somewhat”*

ACHIEVING A MORE EFFECTIVE BUSINESS-ARTS RELATIONSHIP	TOTAL
Offer greater K-12 arts education initiatives	75%
Broaden arts programs to reach the underserved in the community	74%
Provide more tangible benefits such as discount tickets, use of their facilities and workplace programs	72%
Offer opportunities for employees to serve as volunteers in the arts	72%
Be willing to work with a company’s advertising, marketing and public relations departments	66%
Offer greater opportunities for company recognition such as signage, product displays and promotional tie-ins	63%
Understand a company’s operating objectives	46%
Offer more tie-ins with a company’s products and services	44%

*Excerpt for the National Survey of Business Support to the Arts, The BCA Report: 2001 by Business Committee for the Arts, Inc.*

is significant in the sponsor relationship. This marketing concept is that supporters of the arts would use or feel more favorably toward a business sponsoring an arts or cultural event than one that does not.

Increasingly, arts organizations and events in Alabama are providing sponsorship opportunities. Eric Jambor, Director of the Sidewalk Moving Picture Festival in Birmingham notes, "A huge percentage of our income comes from sponsorship, allowing us to keep low ticket prices for the presentation of new films to the public." Such sponsor designations as "Official Hotel" and "Official Airline" provide in-kind rooms and tickets for artistic personnel, greatly impacting possible event costs.

As a new event, Sidewalk has worked to attract national sponsors from such related fields as film technology and production. Growing national interest indicates event success and also attracts other sponsors. Jambor says, "We build collaboration. It's more about first getting national sponsors involved at a small level and then working for an annual commitment. He continues, "We have an open relationship with our sponsors—the more you put in the more you get out of it. We encourage our sponsors to find fun ways to get their customers involved." He uses the example of advance sale tickets available only at certain sponsor locations. To document annual success, Sidewalk sends press kits after the event containing publicity and reviews of the year's program and beginning a request process for the next year.

Eileen Kunzman, Founder and Director of Magic City Art Connection, Operation New Birmingham's annual arts festival, emphasizes, "Without our



*The Magic City Art Connection, Birmingham, Alabama.*

business partners and friends, we're not going very far. They are critical—providing 50% of our support."

She believes there are four important aspects in the relationship between business and an art event. "The first is being interested in the arts—having the insight to see the importance. The second is to say 'yes' by making funds available." (Both cash dollars and in-kind services are very important. Services, such as donation of all the festival signage—are sometimes "very hefty.") "Third is to become personally involved by volunteering and serving on committees. Fourth is leadership, serving on the board."

Many corporations buy art at Magic City for their offices. Kunzman notes "Arts in the workplace say something about that company; how they feel about their employees; how they feel about the community and creativi-

ty." She comments that a sponsoring business, while being a good community citizen, also gains in return from "associating its name with a quality event, with a large public audience and with the high energy atmosphere the arts generate."

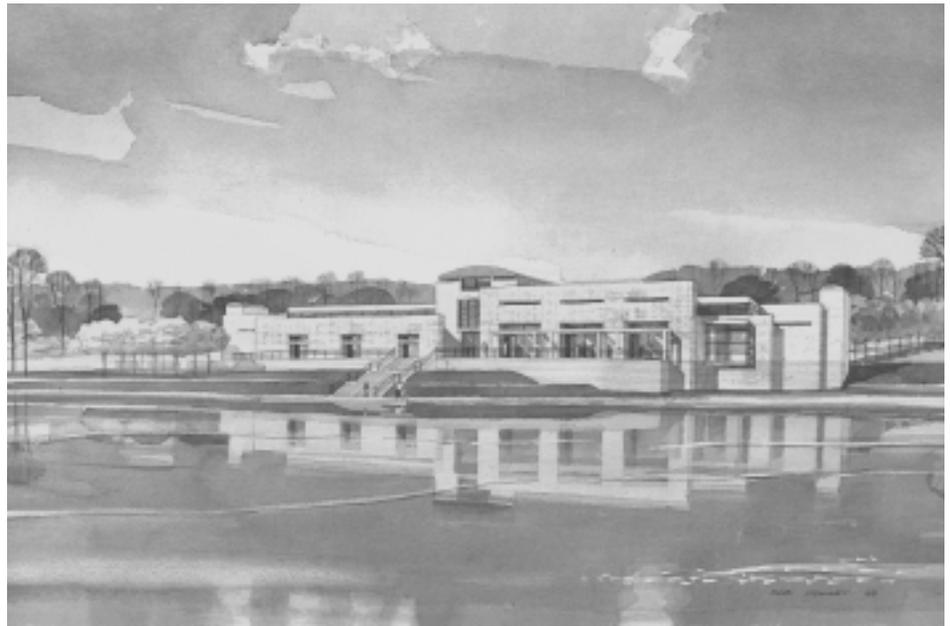
"Where else can a company get exposure to 90,000 people who see your name over one weekend in a positive environment?" asks Jo Ann Henderson, Festival Director of Panoply, the annual event produced by The Arts Council of Huntsville. She reports that their sponsors have opportunities such as Exclusive Beverage Provider, Entrance, Stage and various children's activity sponsorships, as well as the Art Marketplace. "Businesses like the feel of the festival, the family environment and the quality entertainment," she notes. Their employees also come and work together as volunteers at the event, identified by wearing T-shirts with the company logo and building such intangible benefits as camaraderie, pride and job satisfaction.



*Panoply Festival of the Arts, Huntsville, Alabama.*

Institutions, such as the Jule Collins Smith Museum of Art, currently under construction at Auburn University, provide high quality and high public visibility. “Businesses are interested in being involved,” says museum Director Dr. Michael De Marsche. “Financial institutions are often specifically interested in education. A partnership with the museum and its outreach to schools is very attractive.” With a sponsor, plans are being developed to bring every 3rd grade student in Lee County to the museum. In a non-urban environment, the museum can become the center of the community. De Marsche continues, “There is a return benefit there. Corporate events held in the museum are a benefit to them. This also allows the museum to present itself to other corporate leaders.”

The Energen Corporation has established its own art event, and is currently mailing the prospectus for its 4th annual art competition celebrating “the wonder of Alabama art.” Four winning entries become part of the permanent “Alabama Collection”, and are displayed at Energen Plaza, the company’s headquarters in Birmingham. Purchase awards range from \$5000 to \$2500, providing both visibility and financial support for Alabama artists. Jack Mann, chair of the employees committee that organizes the exhibition, comments, “The chairman of Energen values education, the environment and the arts.” As umbrella corporation for Alabama Gas and Energen Resources, the company is particularly interested in art related to the environment—landscape and wildlife. Purchases of non-representational art are also made.



Muir Stewart, *The Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art at Auburn University*, watercolor, 2001, from the permanent collection of The Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art at Auburn University.

Photo courtesy of The Jule Collins Smith Museum of Fine Art at Auburn University

Mann says that the idea began as the company located in its new building. They decided to purchase and display Alabama art, and the competition grew out of that need. He says, “The employees love having art in the building. They feel very free to give their opinion about the art and vote for their favorite non-prize winner.”

The international business community is locating in Alabama. The mission of the Birmingham International Festival, now celebrating its 53rd year, is to “build bridges of understanding with the nations of the world through arts, education and economic development programs.” Each year a different country is featured through such events as educational programs in the schools, a three-day street festival and a business and trade forum and exchange. This view makes a tight connection between the arts and business, showing a strong inter-relationship and tying a cultural view with economic investment.

The Festival also honors companies and individuals from both the United States and the featured country with Crystal Crown Awards, recognizing strong social responsibility programs, including support for the arts.

Executive Director Iris Gross says these awards then “lead to relationships, which is how business is conducted.”

Johnny Aycock, President of the West Alabama Chamber of Commerce notes that Canadian, French, Japanese and German companies are well established in the West Alabama area. “They came to this community to invest, to build their company, to build a plant, to build products and to make money.” But in return, “they are very active corporate citizens.” He continues, “Without financial and leadership business support, we would not be as rich culturally as we are. These corporations enhance the level of investment in the arts. They also enhance community visibility. The new, international flavor changes attitudes, giving a progressive can-do edge that trickles down to the entire community.”

Aycock concludes, “It’s good business to invest in the arts.” ■

*Georgine Clarke is Visual Arts Program Director for the Alabama State Council on the Arts and director of the Alabama Artists Gallery.*

# ARTS MEANS BUSINESS

## *A Tale of Four Cities*

By William M. Jarnigan

When Forrest Wright begins courting an industrial prospect, much like two teenagers on their first date, he tries to find a conversational common ground. Like the timid youngsters, he may offer that “it sure is a nice day,” but more than likely, the executive director of the Shoals Economic Development Authority will offer favorite tales of the four cities of Florence, Muscle Shoals, Sheffield and Tuscumbia—those of W.C. Handy, the Florence-born “father of the blues,” and Tuscumbia’s internationally-famous blind daughter, Helen Keller, as common denominators. The latter he uses particularly if talking with industrialists from Japan, a nation that holds Keller in great reverence.

“Alabama, because of things that happened in the past, is not always positive” in the mind of outsiders, he said. “I use the Helen Keller story all the time and nine times out of 10, people are familiar with it. That’s a good tool we use quite often.”

He has taken economic prospects to events like *The Miracle Worker* at Ivy Green, Keller’s childhood home behind which sits the famed water pump, so prominently featured at the end of the dramatic play that captures her communicative rebirth.

Steve Holt, president of the Shoals Chamber of Commerce, said visitors from outside the South do not expect to see facili-



*The famed pump at Ivy Green, Helen Keller's home in Tuscumbia, Alabama.*

ties like the Ritz Theatre (in Sheffield), the Tennessee Valley Arts Center (Tuscumbia) and the Kennedy-Douglass Center for the Arts (Florence). “They are surprised at what they find in the Shoals and the sophistication of it. It was surprise to me when I came here.” This from a man who arrived in 1994 from Asheville, North Carolina, a city that was culturally developed after becoming a favorite of the nouveau riche from New York and New England.

Sheffield mayor Ian Sanford said “the arts centers and theatres are assets the community needs in order to entice people to move.” Wright also uses the Muscle Shoals music recording business as a talking point. In 2002, an engineer was surveying some property for a possible plant when Muscle Shoals music was mentioned. “She began to educate me. She was so well versed in our musical heritage.” She mentioned that her

husband, a musician, had patterned his playing after that of Muscle Shoals Rhythm Section bassist David Hood. She later met Hood and was able to take stories home to her husband. (Her company optioned the property.)

“We want people to remember our community long after they leave,” Wright said. The arts are part of the quality of life aspect of the Shoals that Wright and others use to sell the area. “Quality of life is not in the top two, three or four issues in making a decision to locate here, but after the financial and

Photo by Patrick Hood

logistical issues are satisfied, quality of life issues begin to surface. “Most of the decision-makers of the companies are not the people moving into the area, so if they can use theatre (as a drawing card), that is useful. Probably, the most important thing, when all is said and done, is not what we can do with the arts as an economic recruiting tool, but what the arts do to the community to improve it, so that the community is a

better economic recruiting tool. It’s not because of the Zodiac Theatre that we are successful, but we are successful because of how the arts provide such a well-rounded opportunity to live and work in this community.”

Mary Settle Cooney, executive director of the Tennessee Valley Arts Center, notes that her organization works closely with SEDA and the Chamber to promote the arts. “When the leaders of businesses come to the Shoals to decide if they want to build here or not, they are given an arts packet to inform them of the culture available. We often receive telephone calls from individuals who are new to the area and want to know about cultural things in which their children can participate.”

Such a call led one chief executive officer and his family to move to the Shoals, says Barbara Broach, the director of the Kennedy-Douglass Center for the Arts and city museums in Florence.

“The couple were staying in a local motel while looking at the area. The wife called me about the arts community and what it offered for her children. She said she would not go to a cultural wasteland. She wanted an area where the arts were flourishing,” said Broach, the wife of city planner Barry Broach, who is a former member of the Alabama State Council on the Arts. Broach’s pitch to the woman must have been persuasive. The family relocated to the Shoals. One of the daughters, now a young adult, is a playwright in New York City.

“A lot of decisions (about relocation) are made by the wife and children,” said Broach.

Wright said, “There is no magic bullet in economic development. We have to do a lot of things. The arts and cultural



*The interior of the Ritz Theatre in Sheffield, Alabama.*

Photo by Patrick Hood

activities in the Shoals will not reduce unemployment by 10 percent, but all together, they will make a substantial impact on the economy of the Shoals.” And they have.

In 1995, the Shoals Chamber’s cultural affairs committee commissioned a study of the economic impact of the arts on Colbert and Lauderdale counties by Dr. Keith Absher, a University of North Alabama marketing professor. Completed the next year, the study found that 71 non-profit arts and cultural organizations had a total economic impact on the Shoals of \$12,313,954. (Individual artists were not surveyed because of the lack of time and money.)

The organizations hosted 597 performances, programs and events annually. Seventeen museums, including the Alabama Music Hall of Fame in Tuscumbia, and other attractions were open to the public year-round. Of the 799,839 persons attracted to the events, 23 percent, or 183,963, were from outside the area, which had a population base of 143,344.

Cooney says 65,000 people participate annually in programs at the TVAC and see productions at the Ritz Theatre. Mayor Sanford added, “The Ritz Theatre is responsible for bringing more people to Sheffield than anything else in the city. School children from other areas come in for plays.”

The organizations employed 96 persons full-time and 101 part-time. Three hundred and four outside personnel were factored into the equations. The payrolls, from budgets totalling \$5.9 million, were \$2,817,260. The agencies spent \$1 million locally. “Production materials that are purchased for exhibitions and set construction benefit the local lumber and hardware companies. Salaries for contracted services are



*The Kennedy-Douglass Center for the Arts in Florence, Alabama.*

generally expendable income for the artists; therefore, they often use the money for entertaining or shopping. The employees of the arts use their salaries to maintain their lifestyles, such as paying rent and purchasing cars, houses, insurance, groceries, gas and other things necessary to survive in the world,” Cooney noted.

The event attendees spent \$1.7 million and accounted for six percent of the room rentals at area motels. “They eat at local restaurants, fill their gas tanks, buy new clothes, go to local hair dressers, and so forth,” Cooney said.

Absher, who used a multiplier of 2.2, concluded that “Shoals citizens support arts activities in the community and at the same time arts activities bring tourists into the area.”

(These numbers have certainly risen with the advent of activities such as the annual Trail of Tears motorcycle ride that brings in more than 100,000 persons in a two-day period. That weekend is capped with an outdoor concert at the Music Hall of Fame.)

He also noted that “The expenditures made by attendees are just as important as those expenditures made by the organizations. Individuals attending arts and cultural activities make purchases among such categories as hotels and lodging places, eating and drinking establishments and other related goods and services other than the cost of admission.”

Broach has seen a change in the way her employer views

the arts. When she first took over the city arts program in 1976, the budget was \$7,500. Florence now appropriates \$300,000 for her use. “They know their money is going to develop a quality of life.”

Mayor Sanford said Sheffield, a former industrial city landlocked from further expansion by its sister cities, funds the Ritz Theatre and the TVAC (even though the latter is in Tuscumbia) “because we know the importance of that. I like the programs they do for the young kids who otherwise may never understand theatre. If they are not around it, they are not going to appreciate that. We contributed to Songfest (a festival promoting songwriters created by the Muscle Shoals Music Association in 2002), because we know the importance of music in the area. We support Sheffield Swings, an all-day festival in October. For a

community our size, we are fortunate to have the arts we have. I can remember when that was not happening. There is a greater appreciation now.”

Debbie Wilson, a former radio newswoman who left the Shoals for Hollywood before returning in 1993 to work for the AMHOF, has observed a marked difference in attitudes toward quality of life. “When I returned from Los Angeles, I found a more active arts community and a new attitude to the arts by elected officials. That has continued to grow.” Now the executive director of the Florence-Lauderdale Tourism Bureau, Wilson frequently calls upon local artists, such as actor David Hope, bluegrass singer/folk artist, UNA Department of English chair Dr. William Foster, and singer/songwriter Gary Baker, to assist in her efforts to promote the area as a tourist destination and to entertain the visitors once they arrive. One of her big selling points has been bass tournaments on the Tennessee Valley Authority lakes. She has had Baker, who co-wrote the monster hit “I Swear” for country singer John Michael Montgomery and the pop act All-4-One, sing at the luncheons for the fishermen’s wives.

“Merging bass fishing and the music industry is something you do not normally think about,” she grinned.

Baker, who also co-wrote the number one country/pop hit “I’m Already There” for Lonestar, has had a definite economic impact on the Shoals, so much so that SunTrust Bank has

elected him to its board of directors. He and singer/song-writer Walt Aldridge (formerly of The Shooters) and singer/record producer Mac McAnally formed in mid-2002 a new production company which they are housing at Muscle Shoals Sound Studios on the south bank of the Tennessee River.

For many years, beginning in the 1970s, Rick Hall, the owner of Fame Recording Studios and considered by most the “father of Muscle Shoals music,” and other music industry leaders called upon the political chiefs to recognize that newer and better hotels were needed, better service and more flights were needed at the airport and other issues had to be addressed for the industry to survive.

Those cries fell on the deaf ears of some politicians from a generation that saw smokestacks as the economic salvation for an area, not music played by white boys for black singers or long-haired Europeans. “We missed some opportunities years ago,” noted Holt. “If we are going to succeed, we have to be recognized as being business friendly, a place that paves the way for business to get up and running without throwing up obstacles. We should have been doing that with the music industry all along. It could have been the major driving force in our economy today. The Shoals community had not recognized that what we’re talking about is individual small businesses. At one time we had many of them and that went away. Now, it’s coming back in a different way. It’s musicians, songwriters, arrangers. They are small busi-

ness people who have an impact on the economy.” But cheap land, labor, water, utilities, cheap everything was what was promoted. “That’s the way the South sold itself,” moaned Holt. However, a few funerals and the emergence of more open minds have changed the scene. Leadership Shoals devotes a full-day review of the arts and culture in the Shoals with its annual class.

“Younger people are coming into lead roles in government, the plants and businesses around town. They have more interest and appreciation in the arts than generations before them,” Broach said.

“More recently, the old philosophy that more jobs tend to create a better community has given way to a new philosophy that a better community tends to create better jobs. It is the concept of total community development. We had better have a well-rounded community if we are going to succeed. Clearly, that includes arts, culture and education,” the chamber president said.

Quality of life is an issue inherent in the minds of many Shoals leaders today. Sanford, one of the younger leaders, lives the arts. An individual contributor and a city leader who promotes his government’s financial and logistical support of the arts, Sanford is married to a drama teacher who is very vocal on her thoughts about the arts. Sheffield High School teacher Nancy Sanford was in the Shoals delegation who went to California in the early 1990s to court a firm proposing to build a rocket motor booster plant in the nearby Yellow Creek



*The Frank Lloyd Wright Rosenbaum House Museum in Florence, Alabama.*

Photo courtesy of The Florence Department of Arts and Museums

nuclear facility abandoned by TVA during construction. She reported that the Shoals was not a cultural desert. "The people who I work with here, many of whom are involved directly or indirectly in the arts, are community leaders. They involve themselves in the Chamber to make things happen," Holt said.

"Visitors see that the Shoals Area is vibrant and that elected officials put money into the arts. That is important to the quality of life and is an important factor in attracting economic development. It is gratifying that the arts community realizes how important the tourism business is. We blend the two together—tourism and the arts," said Wilson.

Several other entities use arts as a drawing card. UNA offers an annual writers festival, the George Lindsey Film Festival, the T. S. Stripling Festival (in recognition of the Pulitzer-Prize-winning novelist who attended there), theatrical productions, many art exhibitions and numerous musical events, and hosts the Muscle Shoals Concerts, Inc.'s performances. The Shoals Symphony and Opera South are new and thriving. The 25-year-old, weeklong W. C. Handy Music Festival, which has more than 200, mostly free, events in both Colbert and Lauderdale counties, pulls in an international audience. The Frank Lloyd Wright House, the only one designed and built in Alabama by the famed architect, is now open for tours in Florence, which also is home for the Handy Home and Museum. Numerous artist-owned galleries, eight in Florence alone, have opened in recent years. "Arts Alive" attracts many artists, while the Alabama Renaissance Faire draws upon the cultural heritage of Florence's sister city, Florence, Italy.

Handy Festival executive director Nancy Gonce, with the aid of ASCA grants and many groups, spearheaded an attempt, with Shoals CultureNet, to collectively promote all the area's arts and cultural events and track their attendance. She and others also established the new Shoals Film Commission. One artist who is doing his part to promote the community is realist painter Tim Stevenson, who, unlike Thomas Wolfe, has found a way to come home again. After graduating from UNA in 1973, he felt he had to leave the



Photo by Mark Baggs

*Interior of W. C. Handy's church, Greater Saint Paul AME, during the Handy Festival in Florence, Alabama.*

Shoals to establish himself. With the advent of commercial possibilities on the Internet and the realization that most of his clients

were in states outside his Augusta, Georgia, base, he and wife Carol moved into a historical home on the main street of Florence, where he continues to paint for folks living in Michigan, New Mexico, North Carolina and Delaware. He has signed a deal with one of Bill Gates's firms in Seattle to market worldwide digital images of his work.

"They are surprised at the lifestyle here in northwest Alabama and they are charmed by the fact I am in Florence. Most of their clients are in larger cities," he laughed.

Stevenson in 2002 printed in the Shoals 180,000 greeting cards which feature his art and which he plans to market across the U.S. and in Europe and Japan with the aid of a Florence-based international distribution firm. On the back of each card is a reference to the Shoals Area, specifically for its tourism potential.

Wilson noted, "It is gratifying that the arts community realizes how important the tourism business is."

"With all other things being equal, a strong arts program will put one community above the others," concluded Sanford. Certainly, he and the others know that the Shoals means business where the arts are concerned. ■

*Bill Jarnigan, the University of North Alabama Director of University Relations, is a former executive director of the Muscle Shoals Music Association and a former board member of the Alabama Film Commission and the Alabama State Council on the Arts.*

# Economic Impact of *European Masterpieces* at Birmingham Museum of Art

by Frances Caldwell

This past spring, the Birmingham Museum of Art (BMA) hosted *European Masterpieces: Six Centuries of Paintings From the National Gallery of Victoria, Australia*. The impact of Museum visitation was enormous: almost 70,000 people viewed the exhibition. But just as important, the economic impact on Birmingham during these two months was also enormous: *European Masterpieces* generated more than \$4 million worth of new business, produced nearly \$1.2 million worth of wages and salaries, and supported 62 jobs.

"I knew our contribution would be meaningful, but frankly, I was surprised and delighted the number was so high," said BMA Museum Director Gail Trechsel. "This compares extremely favorably with economic figures

tabulated by the Virginia Museum in Richmond where *Monet, Renoir and the Impressionist Landscape* generated \$3.2 million, and, the Speed Museum, whose presentation of *Rembrandt to Gainsborough* brought \$3.3 million to the Louisville economy."

## Background On Exhibition and Economic Impact Study

*European Masterpieces* was acclaimed as one of the most outstanding exhibitions ever hosted by the Museum. Spanning over 600 years, the exhibition included 88 of the Gallery's most important old master and modern paintings by 75 renowned artists. Represented were Tintoretto, van



Photos courtesy of the Birmingham Museum of Art

*The Charles Ireland Sculpture Garden (lower terrace), Birmingham Museum of Art.*

***The exhibit generated more than \$4 million worth of new business, produced nearly \$1.2 million worth of wages and salaries and created 62 jobs.***

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Dyck, El Greco, Rembrandt, Canaletto, Gainsborough, Reynolds, Turner, Pissarro, Manet, Monet, Van Gogh, Modigliani, Picasso, among many others. The collections of the National Gallery, Victoria, have long been known and admired by art lovers the world over; this traveling exhibition was the first time the collection left Australia, giving American audiences an opportunity to see these magnificent treasures first-hand. The Birmingham Museum, one of five American museums to present the collection, was the only venue in the Southeast.

The Museum, of course, was incredibly proud of hosting this spectacular exhibition and thrilled with the response, both in terms of numbers of visitation and the excitement it generated throughout the city and beyond. "This was our third "blockbuster" in the last three years (Egypt 1999, Matisse, 2000) and we wanted to document what these exhibitions mean for both the community and the Museum," remarked Trechsel. "We, like so many arts organizations, frequently need to make the argument for the "value" of the arts. We know that museums, theatre, opera, dance, music and visual artists give audiences the unique opportunity to come face to face with a real experience. In addition, the arts give communities vibrancy and an enhanced understanding of who they are. We provide countless educational resources, create cultural capital, attract or retain businesses, enliven city centers and bring the most desirable tourists to town – cultural tourists – but often these contributions are intangible or anecdotal and not easily documented. The last component, however, visitors who come specifically for an arts event, can be counted, their economic impact on the city or town can be measured. In addition, one can learn significant pieces of information from them about their experience in your facility, how they got there and if they will come back."

The Museum decided the *European Masterpieces* exhibition, with its broad appeal and unmatched quality, offered an opportune moment to gather this information. Two studies were subsequently commissioned: a visitor's survey conducted by Dr. Steven Bitgood, professor at Jacksonville State University and noted visitor studies specialist, and the other, an economic impact study by Dr. S. D. Lee, professor of economics at the University of Alabama at Birmingham.

Dr. Bitgood, with his students, conducted surveys on several weekends, weekdays and evenings, interviewing visitors as they exited the exhibition. Visitors were asked to complete a two-page survey (developed by Dr. Bitgood and the

Museum staff) which asked a variety of questions concerning the visitor's background and activities surrounding the show, how they heard about the exhibition and their experience at the Museum. This one survey served for both Dr. Bitgood's and Dr. Lee's assessments.

### Results of Visitor and Economic Impact Studies

*European Masterpieces* was on view at the Museum for 64 days from February 10 to April 14, 2002. During that time, over 68,162 patrons visited the exhibition. The money these visitors spent on tickets, meals, lodging, shopping and other activities, combined with the Museum's expenditures in bringing the exhibition to Birmingham, generated more than \$4.1 million worth of new business, produced nearly \$1.2 million worth of wages and salaries, and supported 62 jobs. (See chart on page 19)

Of those who visited, it is estimated that 46.1% came from outside the Jefferson County area, and 22.8% came from outside the state of Alabama. The exhibition thus attracted almost 32,000 visitors to Jefferson County and over 15,000 visitors to Alabama. More than 42% of visitors spent at least one night during the course of their visit, spending nearly \$530,000 on lodging, and almost 73% ate at least one meal, for dining revenue of almost \$937,000. Approximately 38% of visitors to *European Masterpieces* planned to include shopping as part of their visit to Birmingham, with an estimated expenditure of more than \$729,000 in local retail establishments.

Although the Museum is a tax-exempt entity, spending by visitors and the Museum and the 62 jobs supported by the *European Masterpieces* exhibition generated significant tax revenue through state and local income taxes, sales taxes and the Birmingham and Jefferson County occupational tax. Over \$28,000 in state income tax, more than \$54,000 in state and local sales taxes, and nearly \$10,000 in occupational taxes can be attributed to the exhibition.

During the exhibition and in the months preceding its opening, Museum expenditures in the Birmingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA, which consists of Jefferson, Shelby, St. Clair and Blount counties) for *European Masterpieces* exceeded \$996,000. Wages and salaries paid by the Museum or by others as a result of the Museum's local

# Economic Impact of the *European Masterpieces* Exhibition of the Birmingham Museum of Art on the Birmingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Birmingham Museum of Arts displayed the European masterpieces Exhibitions for 64 days from February 10 to April 14, 2002. During the exhibit 68,162 patrons visited. The exhibit generated a significant economic impact on the Birmingham MSA.

The exhibit generated more than \$4 million worth of new business, produced nearly \$1.2 million worth of wages and salaries and created 62 jobs.

## TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

<u>Output or New Business</u>	<u>Earnings or Wage/Salaries</u>	<u>Employment or Jobs</u>
\$4,098,178	\$1,166,727	62

## FISCAL IMPACT

<u>Tax Description</u>	<u>State</u>	<u>4 Counties</u>
Income tax	\$28,000	--
Sales Tax	\$43,144	\$11,137
	<u>Birmingham City</u>	<u>Jefferson County</u>
Occupational tax	\$4,360	\$5,034

## ECONOMIC IMPACT OF VISITORS ON BIRMINGHAM MSA

<u>Expenditures</u>	<u>Output</u>	<u>Earnings</u>	<u>Employment</u>
Hotels	\$529,472	\$166,587	10.099
Eating & Drinking Places	\$936,945	\$277,986	19.718
Retail Trade	\$729,365	\$229,456	12.137
Other Membership Organizations	\$906,177	\$223,113	9.336
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>\$3,101,958</b>	<b>\$896,141</b>	<b>51.291</b>

Excerpt from *Economic Impact of the European Masterpieces exhibition of the Birmingham Museum of Art on the Birmingham Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)*. Prepared by Dr. S. D. Lee, UAB, September 2002.

contracts for the exhibition were more than \$270,000. Some of the most significant local Museum expenditures were in the areas of construction, printing and publishing, communications, utilities and personal services.

The visitor profile for patrons of *European Masterpieces* was fairly typical of the common profiles for museum visitors throughout the United States. More than 86% had completed at least some college, and 31% had pursued a

post-graduate education. Females made up 63.5% of the visitors to the exhibition. Interestingly, visitors were fairly evenly distributed by age, countering previous surveys and assumptions where the majority of visitors were over 45 years of age.

Only 3.4% came alone to the exhibition, and 3.5% with tour groups, while a huge 93% came with friends or family. This social interaction is also reflected by the fact that 72.8%



*Museum visitors learning more about the European Masterpieces exhibition through audio presentations that enhance the viewing experience.*

extended the event by having lunch or dinner and 37.8% also went shopping. Other sights or events were visited by 10.8% but only 2.1% conducted business while in the area.

Although *European Masterpieces* drew the same type of visitor that might visit the Museum without a blockbuster exhibition, the increased visibility of the Museum and the opportunity to see the significant works of art included in the exhibition clearly drew visitors that might otherwise not have attended. Nearly 38% of the *European Masterpieces* patrons indicated that this was their first visit to the Museum, and 20% of repeat visitors stated that they had not been to the Museum at all during the previous year.

Visitors learned about *European Masterpieces* in a variety of ways. Word of mouth was the most significant way, with 43.7% of visitors stating that they heard about the exhibition from other people. More than 83% learned about the exhibition through mass media coverage, with newspapers generating the greatest response at 37.6%. Almost 24% learned about it from TV, 12% radio and 9.9% magazines.

So what did the Museum learn from all of these statistics? First of all, the validation of the Museum as a vital economic force in Birmingham, attracting thousands and thousands of visitors to the area with real money to spend on tickets, food, lodging, shopping and other activities. These studies will surely have an impact on funding, and on more aggressive marketing of the Museum by local and state tourism bureaus. The Museum itself will concentrate more on marketing to Georgia, with over 7.6% of visitors coming from that state. The high attendance of ages 21-30 (18%) and 31-40 (15.2%) will encourage the Museum to think of new ways to attract these groups, previously thought of as too career- and child-occupied to be serious Museum goers. Our exhibition rack cards will have to be reevaluated; over 100,000 were printed and distributed yet only 1.5% of our visitors mentioned them as sources of information.

All in all, the effects of hosting an exhibition such as *European Masterpieces* are multi-fold: the potential for enormous economic impact, the sense of excitement it generates along with a raised awareness of the Museum among the general public and, almost always, a significant increase in membership. (The Museum added over 1400 new members during the exhibition, bringing total household membership to 7700.) Residents of Birmingham expressed tremendous pride that the Museum could bring such an important collection to the city, adding luster to the city's image and fostering Birmingham as a tourist destination.



Photos courtesy of the Birmingham Museum of Art

*The Birmingham Museum of Art had over 68,162 patrons visit the museum during the European Masterpieces exhibition.*

The arts continue to be a vital component in building dynamic communities, and an essential resource for spiritual and intellectual stimulation and growth. They are also, according to a recent report from the National Governors Association Center for Best Practices, "emerging as a potent force in the economic life of cities and rural areas nationwide and are assuming a role as a direct and indirect contributor to state economies." ■

*Francis Caldwell is the Director of Public Relations for the Birmingham Museum of Art.*

# Cultural Heritage Tourism in Appalachian Alabama

by Joyce Cauthen

Many folks who live in Alabama's thirty-seven Appalachian counties don't know that they are Appalachian. They don't, for instance, look, talk or act like the stereotypical hillbillies seen on Smokey Mountain billboards and they live their lives on fairly level ground. Alabama's Mt. Cheaha reaches to 2,400 feet, but many Alabama mountains in the chain have flat tops and sandy soils that supply tomatoes, soybeans, corn and potatoes to distant markets and host hundreds of industrial-sized chicken houses. Perhaps to distance themselves from Alabama's utilitarian mountains, our neighbors at the Georgia Department of Industry, Trade and Tourism say on their website, "There are real mountains here in North Georgia-not just lumpy land, but hillsides that claw the sky."

The demographics of the area are not what one expects of the Appalachians either. Folks of Celtic and English ancestry who established many of the customs and speech patterns of the southern mountains reside in the region, yet three of Alabama's thirty-seven Appalachian counties have majority African-American populations, and most have a growing number of Latino residents.

As in the rest of the world, time has refused to stand still in this portion of the Appalachians. It has witnessed shifts away from individual farms to agribusiness;

from making textiles and garments to building automobiles and rockets; from coal mining and steel making to jobs in restaurants and hospitals. Each shift has engendered enormous changes in the culture of the area, affecting where people live, where they go to church, where they shop, how they socialize and with whom. Add to these changes the effects of radio and television advertising, chain stores and food franchises, and the result can be a local or regional culture that is indistinct from that of the rest of the nation, one that does not understand its past or relate to what is special and unique in its present. Yet life in the region is enriched by traditions that could also enrich the lives of tourists seeking a culture that is different from their own.

In the southern rim of the Appalachians resides the lore and skills involved in mining, logging, farming, fishing, textile and foundry work and other ways people have made a living there. Master potters, quilters, blacksmiths and basketmakers live there as well as those who excel in cooking the favored foods of the region or of their immigrant ancestors. Across the region are fiddlers and banjo players as well as masters of blues harmonica and guitar. Folks in the Appalachian counties of Alabama host Sacred Harp singings that attract singers from across the nation to sing fa-so-la



*Joyce Cauthen was commissioned to write a working paper for a conference entitled "Building Creative Economies" held in Asheville, NC, April 28-30, 2002. Funded by the Appalachian Regional Commission, National Endowment for the Arts and the Thomas S. Kenan Institute for the Arts, this conference concerned cultural heritage tourism and the positive effect it can have on Appalachian communities. Cauthen's report presented an overview of such efforts in the Appalachian regions of Mississippi, Alabama, Georgia and South Carolina. With the approval of the conference sponsors she has rewritten it to feature Alabama exclusively.*



Lonnie Holley, carving core sand at Kentuck Festival of the Arts.

music in a style developed in colonial days. Other styles of shape-note singing prevail across the region, including Southern Gospel or “seven-shape” music, sung in both white and black communities. Primitive Baptists sing *a cappella* hymns from word-only books to tunes passed to them through generations. Many African-American churches sing haunting “old one-hundreds” in a chant-like style called “Dr. Watts” or “meter music,” brought to this country by the Pilgrims. The Hispanic residents of the area have brought mariachi bands and norteño music, celebrations of Las Posadas and Quinceanos, and special foods to their new communities, and in the old communities church homecomings, decoration

days and footwashings still bring scattered family members back home.

Because Alabamians have held on to customs that have waned elsewhere, many of its communities have attractions to offer potential visitors who want something other than theme parks, golf courses and casinos. Communities that are aware of their special customs, artists, history, foods and buildings and have the energy to develop these resources and make them accessible to a growing number of cultural heritage tourists will find more than financial benefits. Such efforts also lead to community pride and the preservation of forms of music, crafts, stories, buildings, and

social events that are worth saving.

The City of Northport in Tuscaloosa County offers a fine example of how individual citizens can effect an economic turn around of their community based on its history and culture. Once known as Kentuck” or “Canetuck,” it originally served as a port for steamships carrying cotton to Mobile and later for barges carrying coal down river. Today, Northport, population 20,000, is mainly a bedroom town to the city of Tuscaloosa, population 85,000. Its downtown area served people on the north side of the river and remained vibrant until the early 1960s when a northern bypass began to draw shoppers and merchants away. In 1984 the Northport City Hall and its post office relocated to the bypass, drawing much traffic away from the city center. Soon it

consisted of a hardware store, a five and dime, a women's clothing store and an inexpensive meat-and-three restaurant popular with university students. The rest of the buildings were empty or under-used and dreariness prevailed.

Since the 1970's, however, the Northport Improvement Committee, founded by Marvin Harper, had been trying to counteract the trend. In 1971 they produced a successful Northport centennial celebration and decided to turn it into an annual fall festival. The planners consisted of long-time residents of Northport as well as a few newcomers to the area, one being Georgine Clarke, a jewelry maker who had recently moved there from New Mexico, where she had grown up among Native American artisans. Starved for involvement in the crafts of her new home state, she soon became the guiding light of the festival that became the Kentuck Festival of the Arts. It started in 1972 as a local heritage festival featuring fiddlers, antique buggies, handcraft exhibits, demonstrations of craft techniques, and traditional foods such as homemade biscuits and sausage cooked over a woodburning stove. It soon became much more.

In the following thirty years, the festival moved to a wooded park on the banks of the Warrior River, added artists, food vendors, two music stages, and children's music and craft activities. Held on the third weekend in October, even when it coincides with a University of Alabama home game, it is now a juried invitational show which features 300 artists and attracts 20,000 visitors each year. To their



*Fiddlers at Kentuck Festival of the Arts.*

goal of preserving the traditional rural craft skills found in West Alabama, the organizers added, in 1977, the goal of encouraging "the development of the highest quality contemporary crafts and fine arts," and over the years the art there has grown increasingly contemporary. It also became unique and highly successful in discovering and presenting "self-taught," "outsider," or "primitive," artists from across the state. Artists like Jimmie Lee Sudduth, Mose T, and Charlie Lucas have become a huge draw, attracting busloads of folk art lovers from across the nation to the festival. Still Kentuck features as many traditional basketmakers, potters, quilters, and blacksmiths as it can while maintaining balance and quality. Ninth-generation folk potter Jerry Brown of Hamilton, Alabama, loves the festival and wishes there were more like it. He says that people come to buy, not just look. And the bowls and mugs and face jugs he does not sell before closing time on Sunday are likely to be bought by an employee for later sale in the shop at the Kentuck Art Center.

Founded as a non-profit corporation after the fifth festival, the Kentuck Arts Association did not forget its roots as a civic improvement organization. In 1980,

*Still Kentuck  
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and blacksmiths  
as it can while  
maintaining  
balance and  
quality.*

*Workers transformed piles of slag and rusted equipment into pleasant vistas where tourists stroll, festivals are held and weddings happen.*



Photo courtesy of Sloss Furnaces

*Artists cast a 600 pound piece of cast iron sculpture at Sloss Furnaces.*

proceeds from the festival were used to purchase a cluster of derelict buildings that stood on one corner of the main intersection of downtown Northport. These became a museum-gallery, three working craftsmen's studios, a shop for the sale of craft items and an office for the Association, all joined by a landscaped courtyard. It was at this point that the process of reclaiming the heart of Northport began. With the renovation of this prominent property, a citizen who owned several of the empty buildings there was able to attract a fine restaurant to another corner of the intersection. The city planning department of Northport, impressed by the size of the crowds coming to the festival and to the improvements taking place in the downtown area, began to study further improvements, eventually placing a levee at the end of Main Street to prevent occasional floods and writing a grant for a streetscape involving underground wiring, historic

light poles, planters, brick sidewalks and benches. Matching money had to be found for this and the merchants and residents made the necessary phone calls and sold the requisite number of memorial bricks to make it happen.

Today 100% of the buildings in downtown Northport are occupied, filled with shops oriented toward arts and home décor alongside the basic hardware store, barbershop and other businesses that have endured there through the years. Restaurants, gift shops, monthly arts nights, an annual Dickens Festival, and, of course, the Kentuck Festival keep people going there year round.

In Birmingham, development of an obsolete foundry into a historic landmark that proclaims the city's heritage as an iron and steel-making capital has also led to the creation of a community gathering place and performance venue. Sloss Furnace was established near the center of Birmingham in 1880, and by World War I

was among the largest producers of pig iron in the world. In pre-television days, people would entertain themselves by standing on the First Avenue North viaduct beside Sloss Furnace and watching workers pour the brilliant molten iron. By the 1970s, though, the mill had become obsolete and was donated to the City of Birmingham to use as it pleased. Of course, people considered tearing it down or making it into a theme park, but visionary cultural historians, led by the late Randy Lawrence, prevailed and in 1983 Sloss was reopened as a 32-acre park which interprets Birmingham's heritage of coal, iron and steel.

Workers transformed piles of slag and rusted equipment into pleasant vistas where tourists stroll, festivals are held and weddings happen. One of the two huge cooling sheds has become a venue for concerts, parties, and meetings. Thus a historical icon of the city has remained part of the fabric of community life. Sloss, through its metal arts program (see Alabama Arts, Fall/Winter 2001) has also become an internationally known teaching and learning facility. Artists from all over the country come there to cast their pieces and to participate in international conferences on iron casting, monthly workshops, student internships, and outreach programs. They frequently refer to Sloss in reverential terms, calling it a cathedral and their travels to it a pilgrimage.

A restored civil war blast furnace is at the center of another cultural heritage

attraction in Appalachian Alabama.

Tannehill Historical Ironworks State Park has not been content to be just a museum of iron and steel-making, nor a collection of miniature museums in the restored log cabins, school house and country church on the premises, nor just a site for hiking, camping, and picnicking. It is also a cultural center for the region. Its historic buildings are filled with crafts makers and throughout the year it hosts groups of dulcimer players, trout fishers, archers, wood carvers, civil war reenactors and more.



*Apprentices at Sloss Furnaces participate in all aspects of the casting process. Here Calvin Hawkins, Parker High School, and Jessie West of Pelham High pour iron into moulds.*

During the school year thousands of children go through Tannehill's "learning loops" in science, crafts and history. This educational program is coordinated by the University Alabama and based on the rich and varied resources offered at the park.

Photo courtesy of Sloss Furnaces



Early log cabin on the grounds at Tannehill Historical Ironworks State Park.

*Tannehill Trade Days, are where folks gather to buy or swap such things as tools, furniture, knicknacks, dogs, and*

Perhaps the most authentic expression of local culture can be seen on the third weekends, March through November, at Tannehill Trade Days, where folks gather to buy or swap such things as tools, furniture, knicknacks, dogs, and stories. Not related to the park, but nearby and just as authentic, is the Tannehill Opry. There local and visiting bluegrass, country, and gospel musicians gather each Saturday night to entertain, for free, those who love such music. Opry organizers maintain the facility with funds collected by passing a hat each night.

These are a few examples of the institutions, organizations and communities of all sizes in Appalachian Alabama that have a strong sense of the traditional culture of their area and are attracting visitors who are interested in that culture. Other successful programs exist in the region that time and space do not allow me to discuss, and there are even more who, if they had the staff and money and

assistance, would gladly do more to present aspects of the living traditional culture of their area.

What resources do such organizations and institutions have to help them recognize what is traditional in their areas? The Alabama State Council on the Arts has a folklorist, Joey Brackner, on staff who can give some suggestions, but more importantly can offer assistance in applying for grants to support fieldwork. The Alabama Center for Traditional Culture (ACTC), a division of ASCA, can provide guidance in such efforts. The Alabama Folklife Association (AFA), in collaboration with ASCA and ACTC, plans to offer the Alabama Community Scholars Institute in the summer of 2004, which will provide two weeks of training in folklore studies and fieldwork to 25 people who have a strong interest in documenting the traditions of their own communities. Those selected for the Community Scholars Institute may be museum staff members



Photo by Jet Lowe

*Single and double furnaces at Tannehill Historical Ironworks State Park.*

or their chief volunteers, schoolteachers, leaders of various ethnic groups, or people without academic training who are already engaged in cultural documentation. Those wishing to be sent information on this program when it is ready may contact the AFA at 205-822-0505.

We often take for granted our old buildings; the foods we serve at covered dish suppers, our town storytellers and the musicians who play in our churches or at the local VFW. We forget to think about the interesting ways that people have traditionally made their living in the area. However, when museum staff members, amateur historians, traditional cooks, local musicians and crafts makers and other active citizens look together at their communities, they will likely discover aspects of their culture that are worth presenting to tourists and savoring themselves. ■

*Joyce Cauthen is the author of With Fiddle and Well-Roised Bow: Old Time Fiddling in Alabama. She has served as director of the Alabama Folklife festival and produced a number of recordings of traditional music, including Possum Up a Gum Stump: Home, Commercial and Field recordings of Alabama Fiddlers; Jesus Hits Like the Atom Bomb; John Alexander's Sterling Jubilee Singers of Bessemer; and In the Spirit: Alabama's Sacred Music Traditions. She is also the executive director of the Alabama Folklife Association.*

# Exhibition Schedule

## Alabama Artists Gallery

### **November 15, 2002-January 10 2003**

Alabama Masters: ASCA Fellowship Recipients 2002

Larry Allen, Birmingham, clay  
Gary Chapman, Birmingham, painting  
David Haynes, Blount Springs, photography  
Julia Kjelgaard, Auburn, mixed media  
Stephen Savage, Mobile, photography  
Connie Ulrich, Huntsville, jewelry

### **January 24-March 21, 2003**

Across Alabama: New Work in Sculpture and Painting

### **April 1-April 25, 2003**

Arts in Education: Visual Arts Achievement Exhibition

### **May 2-June 27, 2003**

Alabama Signatures/Eight Artists: Painting and Photography

*The Alabama Artists Gallery, located at the offices of the Alabama State Council on the Arts in the RSA Tower in downtown Montgomery, provides an on-going showcase of the work of Alabama artists in all media.*