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On the cover: Detail of *Row Houses*, 1985, by Flavin Glover, Auburn. Cottons, machine pieced, hand quilted, 83 x 104 in. "The Ultimate Quilt Search" by *Quilter's Newsletter Magazine* and the International Quilt Festival, along with *Quiltmaker* and *McCall's Quilting* selected the 100 best quilts of the twentieth century. The quilts were exhibited at the 1999 International Quilt Festival in Houston; *Row Houses* was in that exhibition.

Achievements in the Arts

by Al Head

One could argue that many Alabamians have an inferiority complex when it comes to an inventory of the state's cultural history and its present arts resources. Generally, there has been a lingering perception, in the Deep South, that all the "real" art comes from somewhere else. A cultural import from New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Boston and, most certainly Europe, must be of higher quality than art that is indigenous. Well, it should be emphasized at every opportunity that those perceptions have always been, and continue to be, *wrong!*

As we have squarely entered the year 2000, the new millennium, it seems entirely appropriate to reflect on significant achievements in the arts that have helped shape the personality and character of our state. Alabama has a rich cultural past, with important legacies left to the present generation by hundreds of artists from every way of life and every form of creative expression. As this millennium year of 2000 drew closer, we were inundated with lists that sought to set forth the best from our cultural past—panels of experts ranked the most noteworthy films, novels, athletes, news events, presidents, technological breakthroughs, influential world figures, rock-n-roll

songs, etc. In the spirit of such list-making, we at the State Council on the Arts began to wonder what would be contained in an inventory of *Alabama's most significant achievements in the arts.*

It was decided that compiling such a list would be worthwhile and that to maximize credibility it should come from people who were themselves in the arts community: art historians, educators, artists (visual, performing and literary), arts administrators, and various other "arts experts." The results are, in some ways, predictable, but, on the other hand, there are intriguing surprises. They are presented in their entirety, beginning on page 3, as "The Arts in Alabama: Benchmarks of the 20th Century."

No matter what one's opinion concerning the individual listings, I think that, without doubt, the tally is impressive—it shows great range in virtually all of the arts. It reflects work of long ago and of the recent past. It causes one to pause and regard, with a sense of pride, just what has been accomplished in our state over the years by some very gifted people. This particular inventory, although not comprehensive, does help us appreciate to a greater extent the rich cultural past of our state.

We put forward our listing of "The Arts in Alabama: Benchmarks of the 20th Century," in the hope that it will stimulate dialogue, perhaps even debate, regarding the achievements highlighted. We encourage your own nominations of events/achievements about which you feel strongly, and we would like your feedback on the ones we have showcased. We will present your responses in future issues of *AlabamaArts* later this year.

The Council is devoting three issues, this being the first, of *AlabamaArts* to the theme of evaluating the millennium by looking at the past, the present and the future of the arts in our state. Artists, communities, ideas and creative expressions will be examined, with the end result being an exciting look at where we've been, where we are, and where we're going, in the arts in Alabama. The twenty-first century will unquestionably see dynamic change, growth and exploration in the arts world-wide. Fortunately for Alabama, we stand on a solid base, laid by those who have preceded us. We are in a position to take full advantage their achievements for continued artistic growth and cultural development.

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

The Arts in Alabama: Benchmarks of the 20th Century

by Tucker Dillard

“Stars fell on Alabama.”

The image, as described in Carl Carmer’s 1934 book by that title, was a haunting remembrance from Alabama’s past, though it may well have presaged an aspect of Alabama’s future as well. Twentieth-century Alabama was aglow with a veritable shower of stars, luminaries of art, literature, music, and the stage and screen. From the relatively bleak social and economic conditions at the beginning of the century, bleakness which compelled northern critic H.L. Mencken to harshly christen the entire American South the “Sahara of the Bozart,” Alabama began an artistic flowering that was undaunted by the trying times, and often unashamedly reflective of them. The result is a rich artistic legacy, informed by both a proud agrarian heritage and a progressive devotion to culture and diversity.

The following is a list of ten of the most stellar artists and artistic accomplishments of twentieth-century Alabama. It is in no particular order and makes no pretense of being entirely comprehensive. It is the distillation of responses received from various persons involved in the arts across the state who were informally polled by the Alabama State Council on the Arts in January 2000.

W.C. HANDY

Born in 1873 in Florence, William Christopher Handy began his musical career as an organist in the Greater St. Paul AME Church, where both his father and grandfather were ministers.

Against stern opposition from his father, but with encouragement from a few of the church's musicians, Handy formed a brass band which toured the South for several years around the turn of the century. Soon after, he headed north to St. Louis, where he composed, in 1914, the song that would win him initial fame and remains

perhaps his best known tune, "St. Louis Blues." Handy went on to achieve international recognition for a body

of music remarkable in its precision and range of mood, including such classics as "Memphis Blues," "Careless Love," and "Beale Street Blues." In 1982, the Florence Chamber of Commerce sponsored the first annual "Handy Festival," which is still held every August and attracts musicians from around the country to honor the "Father of the Blues."



W.C. Handy

Ronald McDowell for the Alabama Music Hall of Fame



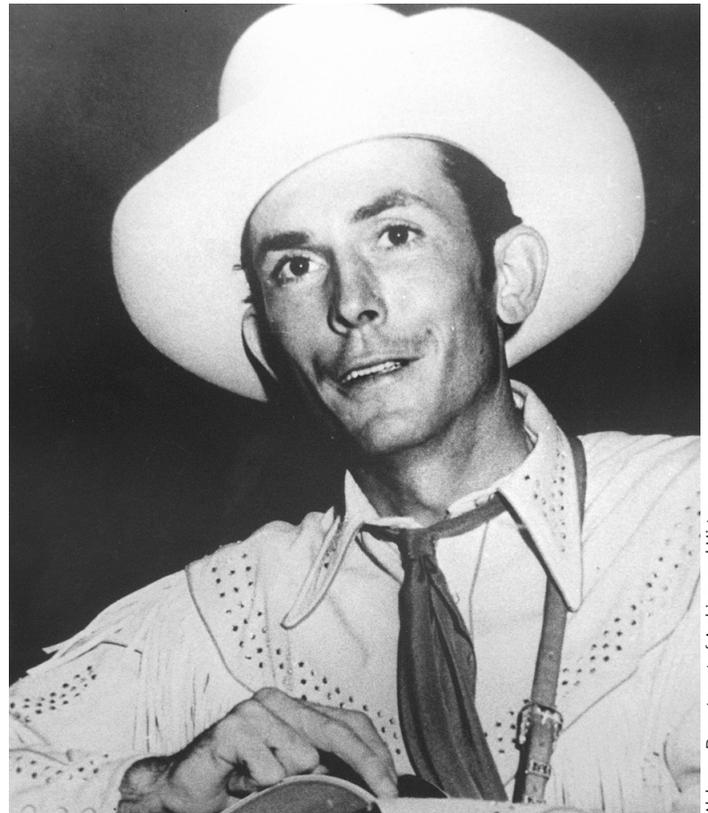
W.C. Handy Museum

Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel

HARPER LEE'S TO KILL A MOCKINGBIRD

Published in 1960 and awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1961, *To Kill a Mockingbird* is universally recognized as a seminal work, a lyrical and moving treatment of social change coming to tired old towns throughout the South. Monroeville's Harper Lee calls her book a "love story, pure and simple." Perhaps the fact that the story is so undeniably both these things accounts for its lasting success, not as only in book form but as a stage adaptation

and Academy Award-winning film. The story beautifully conveys the love between a father and his two children, and Lee's own love of the South and her childhood friends (among them fellow writer Truman Capote) is set in contrast to the ignorance and injustice that Atticus Finch battles in the courtroom. A line near the end of *Mockingbird* reads, "Neighbors bring food with death and flowers with sickness and little things in between." In 1960, Lee brought Alabamians an acclaimed novel, a national treasure, and an enduring "love story."



Hank Williams

Alabama Department of Archives and History

HANK WILLIAMS

Hiram (Hank) Williams was born in Mount Olive, Alabama in 1923. By age eight, he had taught himself to play guitar and, by fourteen, had formed his own band, "The Drifting Cowboys." From the beginning, Williams' music was distinctive in form and substance, echoing the vernacular he had grown up hearing and speaking. His musical style was ground-breaking,

THREE BELLES OF THE BEAUX ARTS



Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum

Zelda Sayre



Alabama Department of Archives and History

Tallulah Bankhead



Alabama Department of Archives and History

Sara Haardt

One might have guessed they grew up together. Briefly, during the early 1900s, three precocious little girls and already aspiring artists—Zelda Sayre, Sara Haardt, and Tallulah Bankhead—lived in the same neighborhood in Montgomery. Zelda and Tallulah often played together. Nicknamed “Dutch”, Tallulah

mimicked everything from tumblers to contortionists to a risqué vaudeville dancer she had seen in Birmingham. Two of the three later married eminent writers; Zelda wed Scott Fitzgerald in 1920 and Sara wed H.L. Mencken in 1930 (apparently Mr. Mencken’s distaste for the South did not preclude him from courting and marrying young

Sara of the “Bozart”). All three went on to notable accomplishments in the arts, Sara in fiction, Zelda in fiction and painting, and Tallulah on stage and screen, though their artistic merits were, arguably, overshadowed by larger personalities—Zelda’s by Scott, Sara’s by H.L., and Tallulah’s by Tallulah.

T.D.

shaped by gospel, Grand Ole Opry legends like Roy Acuff and Ernest Tubb, and the rhythms of black music he learned from a street singer in his hometown named Rufus Payne. His persona was as engaging as his music—the ramblin’ man on a lost highway—and by the time of his too-early death at age 30 in 1953, he was already an icon of American music and American culture. In 1994, *Life* magazine ranked Hank Williams as number one on its list of the hundred most important figures in country music and, in 1987, the Rock n’ Roll Hall of Fame inducted him as a “forefather of rock n’ roll.”

T.S. STRIBLING

Though born in Clifton, Tennessee in 1881, Thomas Sigismund Stribling was reared and schooled in north Alabama and began his career by writing passionately about the agrarian folk of the Tennessee Valley. Stribling authored fifteen novels from 1917 to 1938, including his best-known work, a trilogy consisting of *The Forge*, *The Store*, and *The Unfinished Cathedral*. *The Store*, which concerns a merchant who makes a Faustian bargain, of sorts, in sacrificing morality for political office and power, was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in 1933. Stribling was the first Alabama writer to receive that honor.

TALLULAH BANKHEAD

“Pure as the driven slush,” is how Tallulah Bankhead once characterized her zestful persona, stories of which still circulate around the state and around the country, in theater circles. Born in 1902 in Huntsville to a prominent political family, raised in Jasper and Montgomery, Tallulah, at age fifteen, left home for New York, where she soon landed roles in silent films. She quickly earned a reputation as a contrarian and a wit, holding her own in the banter around the famed Algonquin Roundtable, but her activities as a bon vivant often overshadowed her abilities as an actress. She gained Hollywood clout in such films as *The Devil and the Deep* (1932) and

Lifeboat (1944), and narrowly missed the role of Scarlett O’Hara in *Gone With the Wind*, but her work on the stage, particularly in *The Little Foxes*, by Lillian Hellman, is generally regarded as her finest. An historical marker was recently dedicated at Tallulah’s birthplace in Huntsville, in honor of one of Alabama’s most distinctive personalities and a “darling” of stage and screen.

WILLIAM CHRISTENBERRY

Places like Sprott Church and Spring Hill Cemetery are locales that may well have been known only to residents of surrounding rural Alabama towns, had it not been for the art of William Christenberry. Born in 1936 in Tuscaloosa, Christenberry employs a range of artistic media—photography, painting, sketching, and sculpture—to capture both the beauty and barrenness of the Alabama landscape. Though he has lived with his family in Washington, D.C. since 1968, he returns to his home state every year to photograph sites which have some ineffable quality that resonates in his memory. Thanks to Christenberry’s art, which renders the commonplace remarkable, that quality resonates also in the minds of the many who appreciate his work.



James Yaegashi (left) and Carl J. Cofield in the ASF’s 2000 production of *The Comedy of Errors*.

ASF/Scarsbrook

THE ALABAMA SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL

Founded in Anniston, the Alabama Shakespeare Festival (ASF) began modestly, running plays for six weeks each summer out of a high school auditorium. In the early eighties the fledgling festival was facing bankruptcy, when Winton Blount agreed to help preserve what was becoming a great cultural asset. In 1985, Blount made the largest single donation in the history of American theater. He funded a new state-of-the-art performing arts complex on a 250-acre park in Montgomery, where the Festival began year-round operations with more than 400 performances scheduled each year. Today, the ASF is the fifth largest Shakespeare festival in the world, attracting over 300,000 visitors per year. It produces fourteen world-class productions annually, three being Shakespeare works and the others being classics of the stage and musicals. Perhaps most exciting are the new ASF-commissioned works, such as those for the Southern Writers' Project, which was inaugurated in 1991. All the productions play to glowing reviews from national media, and they are a testament to Alabama's appreciation of, not only classical theater, but of theater which reflects its own peoples' experiences as Southerners and as Alabamians.

KATHRYN TUCKER WINDHAM

At a recent conference sponsored by the Alabama Humanities Foundation, storyteller Kathryn Tucker Windham spoke on the theme "Stories: They're Everywhere." She illustrated that theme by way of a simple, everyday, and absolutely hysterical story from her hometown of Selma. By the end of her tale, everyone in the ballroom, including the distinguished keynote speaker from Dartmouth College, could only clutch their ribs and hope the sweetly-accented oration would pause long enough for them catch their breath. At that event, as she has at many others, Windham carried on that tradition of storytelling so dear to the South. Windham has called Alabama "one big front porch where folks gather on summer nights" and, through her books, photography, and pure storytelling, she continues to make the conversation on that porch colorful, spooky, hilarious, and ever-moving.



Katie Lamar Smith

Kathryn Tucker Windham

OUTSIDER ART

Known also as Self-Taught Art, Visionary Art, and *Art Brut*, Outsider Art has become a highly respected genre in the contemporary American art market. Many of the pioneers of this emerging form are from Alabama and have gained national and international attention: Mose Tolliver (Mose T), Jimmie Lee Sudduth, Charlie Lucas, Thornton Dial, and the late Juanita Rodgers. Outsider artists are not trained in traditional art forms; they often produce their extraordinary art with mundane media: mud, sugar, sticks, masonite, scrap aluminum, and ply-



Alabama Bureau of Tourism and Travel

Mose T

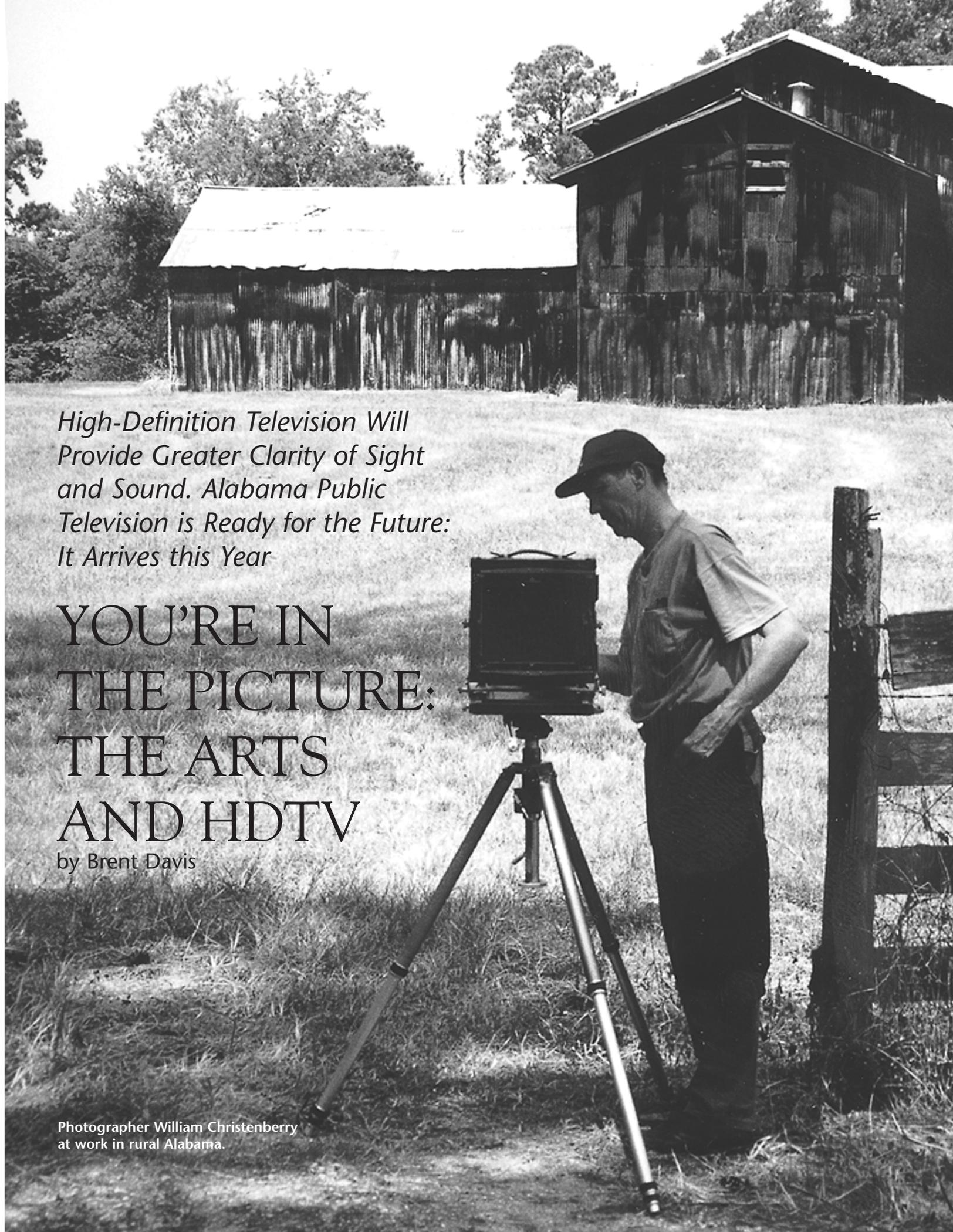
wood and latex paint, the signature materials of Mose T. While the integrity of their work remains clearly uncompromised, outsider artists are gaining insider status with the mainstream, as their work hangs in museums and private collections around the country. Nancy Reagan owns a few Mose Ts, the Yard Dog Folk Art Gallery in Austin, Texas promotes and sells their work, the House of Blues chain of restaurants showcases their art, and amazon.com boasts a host of book titles on these self-taught artists.

THAT MUSCLE SHOALS SOUND

“In Muscle Shoals, they got the Swampers,” sang Lynyrd Skynyrd in their anthem “Sweet Home Alabama.” The Swampers, in-house musicians for FAME Studios, were at the center of a hit recording industry that has flourished in the Shoals area for over forty years. FAME was founded in 1959, Muscle Shoals Sound Studios opened in 1969, and the distinctive style of music recorded at those and other local studios earned the Shoals area the accolade of “hit recording capital of the world.” It also gave the music industry a new term for that distinctive sound—it became, simply and identifiably, that “Muscle

Shoals sound.” Despite recording the likes of The Rolling Stones, Aretha Franklin, and Bob Dylan, the Shoals industry maintains a relatively low profile, which is perhaps preferred by top artists, such as Jimmy Buffett, who drop in occasionally. The area is still home to a musical family of writers and musicians who, along with the residents, seem content with the music itself minus the hype, and with being privy to a grand but understated legacy. Yes, in Muscle Shoals, they got the Swampers. And, yeah, “They’ve been known to pick a song or two.”

Tucker Dillard is Executive Writer for the University of Alabama at Birmingham and a free-lance writer.



*High-Definition Television Will
Provide Greater Clarity of Sight
and Sound. Alabama Public
Television is Ready for the Future:
It Arrives this Year*

YOU'RE IN
THE PICTURE:
THE ARTS
AND HDTV

by Brent Davis

Photographer William Christenberry
at work in rural Alabama.

William Christenberry stands at his camera in a dry, dusty field in Hale County. A tidal wave of lush, verdant kudzu appears to be engulfing the decrepit barn that's in the frame. The rusty tin roof is just a little more orange than the tall, brown weeds that scrape and rustle in the breeze. The mid-day sun makes the barn's ragged eaves cast a coal-black shadow against the building, except for occasional rectangles that are a vivid, dark purple. A closer look reveals that this is where warped planks of the wall have fallen, and you are looking into the abyss of the vacant loft.

Christenberry is an Alabama artist who is widely acclaimed for his

The documentary, funded by the Alabama State Council on the Arts (ASCA), will be one of the first locally produced high-definition television (HDTV) programs in the South when it airs next year on Alabama Public Television (APT). A production of The University of Alabama Center for Public Television and Radio (CPT&R), the program showcases people who combine the state's rich artistic traditions and their own unique vision to create fascinating, innovative, and memorable works of art.

"This is certainly going to be one of the most colorful and striking shows CPT&R has produced in the five decades we've

photographs, paintings, and sculptures of the Black Belt's vernacular architecture. Looking at this scene, with its rich variety of tones, colors, shades, and striking details, such as the grain of the wood and the swirl of silver in a twisted sheet of tin, it's easy to see why so much of his creative life is focused on Alabama's countryside.

But it only feels like you're with Christenberry. You're actually watching a documentary on Alabama Public Television about the arts in the state. And you're seeing it on a remarkable, new kind of television displaying an unbelievably detailed and realistic picture in a widescreen format.



The CPT&R documentary crew on location with William Christenberry.

been creating television programs," says Tom Rieland, CPT&R director. "We believe high definition television is the perfect showcase for this exciting project.

"This program, the first of its kind, will give Alabama's artists the recognition they deserve, and it will show that Alabama has long been the home of vibrant, imaginative, and influential artists."

THE ARTISTS

Michelle Forman and Carolyn Hales just got off the phone with novelist Mark Childress. They're waiting on a call from Emmylou Harris and are huddled over their Day

DIGITAL PUBLIC TV: MORE THAN PRETTY PICTURES

What will digital television mean to the people of Alabama? Imagine you are sitting in front of one of these new boxes a few years from now and you are tuned in to Alabama Public TV. It's a weekday afternoon, and, not surprisingly, you see the Kratt brothers exploring the world of animals in their terrific show for kids. Maybe you are tempted to stay and watch—the program is so good—but you decide to look for something else. Your next move: switch to APT-2, Alabama Public Television's "Alabama Channel," which carries programs such as *The Alabama Experience*, *Discovering Alabama*, *Alabama @ Work*, *For the Record*, and *Outdoor Alabama* all day long.

Or you might switch to APT-3, the "APT Classroom Channel," to take a lesson in Spanish or French, study science, or sit in on a discussion of "best practices" in teaching mathematics. You might decide on APT-4, Alabama Public Television's "Business & Information Channel," where you can take a lesson in cooking from Justin Wilson or perhaps catch last night's *Antiques Roadshow* or *The NewsHour with Jim Lehrer*.

Thanks to digital television technology (DTV), APT will be able to broadcast four different signals at one time—all of which look just as good as today's analog TV. With these multiple channels, public television can fulfill its mission of education, culture, and citizenship to serve viewers of all ages better than ever.

Digital television will mean more than added

channels. The new digital television will be able to download information from a broadcast just like a computer pulls information down from the Internet. Digital broadcasts can carry a stream of additional information into your home while you watch—statistics, graphs, charts, bio-

graphical information, historical data and more—all of which can be displayed on your TV along with the regular picture. The possibilities of digital are almost endless, as new computer technology becomes fully integrated with television.

You may have heard or read about High-Definition Television, or HDTV.

Digital television also makes this technology possible. HDTV provides viewers with a picture of incredible clarity that looks almost three-dimensional.

Some leaders in the televi-

sion industry believe that once people have seen HDTV they won't want to watch anything else. Public television has been a leader in the development of HDTV, and this may be the standard for primetime broadcasts in the future.

Federal Communications Commission regulations

require that all television stations in the nation move to digital transmission in the next several years. Stations that don't just won't exist any more. Alabama Public Television will begin broadcasting in digital in Huntsville and Montgomery by the end of 2000. More digital transmitters will be added in 2001 and 2002. All nine stations must be operational by April 2003.

B.D



CPT&R director of engineering and technical services David Baughn (left) and director Tom Rieland with a new "widescreen" high definition television monitor.



CPT&R videographer Greg McNair shoots with the new high definition television camera, capable of recording remarkably detailed and realistic images.

Timers, trying to decide if they can interview writer Albert Murray in New York after shooting a Poarch basket maker at a Native American festival and before taking a crew

to Auburn to record choreographer Dyann Robinson's latest theatre/dance piece about the Tuskegee airmen.

Forman, an independent filmmaker from Birmingham, and Hales, a producer for CPT&R, have the daunting task of telling the story of the arts in Alabama in a little under 90 minutes.

"Music's probably the area where Alabama artists have had the greatest influence on the rest of the world," says Hales. "There are individual artists, such as Hank Williams, Sun Ra, Nat King Cole, and The Louvin Brothers. And there are also entire genres that bear Alabama's stamp: shaped-note singing by rural white people on Sand Mountain and by African-Americans in the Wiregrass. W.C. Handy is the father of the blues. Jazz is changed by what happens at Birmingham's Tuxedo Junction.

"But there are scores of notable Alabama artists besides musicians. The collective story of these artists is so rich, so broad, that it's quite a challenge to bring it to television."

The challenge is twofold: first, selecting artists. There are too many fine artists to include everyone in the television program. And second, how to make connections and comparisons between the artists to create a program that tells the story of the arts in Alabama instead of a video scrapbook with random snapshots.

"As we're organizing this, it's been helpful for us to think about themes we might use in the documentary," says Forman. "Some of the artists are very traditional. Some are strongly influenced by religion. Some become artists out of their poverty. With others, the prosperity they enjoy allows them unusual opportunities in their



CPT&R videographer Wade Woodall (left) shadows photographer William Christenberry during production of the documentary about the arts in Alabama.

artistic life. One artist is isolated and unique; another is part of a larger, sustaining community. Despite all these things, though, these people are clearly Alabamians and have

been influenced by living in this state."

For example, author Mary Ward Brown's short stories, including the award-winning collection, *Tongues of Flame*, are based on her keen observations of small town and rural life in Alabama's Black Belt, where she has lived for eighty-some years. Yvonne Wells of Tuscaloosa creates bold and colorful picture quilts representing the history and culture of the state and region. Bear Creek native Frank Fleming creates intricate porcelain and bronze sculptures that reflect the flora and fauna he has loved all his life.

Sometimes an artist's Alabama roots are less obvious. Experimental photographer Pinkie Bass of Fairhope doesn't deal specifically with Alabama subject matter. Yet she says living in her native environment is essential to her creative process. The late musician Sun Ra claimed to be from another planet and improvised music that defined the avant garde in jazz. Records show that Sun Ra first touched planet Earth in Birmingham, and that he was a student of the legendary John "Fess" Whatley at Birmingham Industrial High School. For over two generations graduates of Whatley's program fanned out across the country and became essential members of the finest jazz ensembles.

When Alabama artists stay closer to home, their work can still have wide impact. The Louvin Brothers of Sand Mountain combined various kinds of music they heard growing up—from shaped-note singing and string band music, to the blues—to create striking harmonies that reverberated throughout country music in the 40s, and later profoundly influenced another Alabama musician, Emmylou Harris. Harper Lee's Pulitzer Prize winning novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, set in an isolated Depression-

era town, is a classic of American literature and the basis of a Hollywood film starring Gregory Peck. Artists of any place and time often create their best work by connecting their unique life experience with universal themes.

The richly layered contemporary paintings of Frances de la Rosa incorporate uniquely personal images from "Pitt's Folly," her family's antebellum plantation home in Uniontown. As a child in this ancestral setting, de la Rosa said she sometimes felt overwhelmed by the weight of the past. Painting allows her to deal with the past on her own terms. As she and countless other artists will attest, artistic endeavor is not a luxury, but an essential way of dealing with life.

Bill Traylor, a former slave found living on the streets of Montgomery in the 1920s, created paintings and drawings that are today prized in the art world for their strong sense of design and unique vision. Without a home or income, Traylor satisfied a deep need for creative expression, using leftover paint, scraps of wood and paper, and other found materials.

Blues musician Willie King of Pickens County is using one of the South's original musical forms to brighten the prospects of disadvantaged children. Through the "Blues in the Schools" program and other community projects, he helps kids gain self-esteem through developing musical skills and learning about their cultural heritage.

These artists clearly demonstrate what writer Albert Murray considers one of the most important functions of art: that of "stomping the blues." Murray, a Mobile native who has long been a fixture of New York's intellectual scene, says that artistic effort is an essential part of the human struggle "against chaos or the void." Clearly Alabama artists, drawing from a rich blend of cultural, historical, and natural resources as their raw material, provide a unique window on this fundamental human activity.

THE TECHNOLOGY

All in favor of better pictures on television say "aye."

Unfortunately, it's a little more complicated than that.

Although APT will begin airing HDTV programs in Huntsville and Montgomery later this year, viewers will

have to buy a new, widescreen television set to see the improved images in this documentary and other HDTV programs.

"Right now those sets cost more than \$3,000, and, until more television stations broadcast HDTV programs, it's a purchase that most consumers will be reluctant to make," says Rieland.

The federal government has mandated the transition to digital television to make more efficient use of the broadcast spectrum. Television stations will have to replace much of their existing equipment, but, by converting to digital transmissions, there will be more spectrum space available for the thousands of wireless devices that have become a part of everyday life, from pagers to crib monitors.

There will likely be only a handful of HDTV televisions in the state when APT begins digital broadcasting. However, APT and CPT&R will use the documentary to introduce the public to high-definition television. The program will be screened in HDTV at museums, libraries, schools, and other places around the state.

"Through these previews many people will be able to get a good look at high-definition television even before it's available to them at home," says Tom Rieland, CPT&R director.

CPT&R producers and videographers are traveling across Alabama with a \$100,000 state-of-the-art camera to capture images of artists for the program. Even with the life-like high-definition pictures, the subject is still the heart of the documentary.

"The story of the arts and artists in Alabama is a colorful one, rich in tradition and dynamic in contemporary expressions," says Al Head, ASCA executive director. "The arts contribute to the quality of life in Alabama and portray the state's positive personality perhaps better than any other of our resources. The story of the arts in Alabama can be and needs to be told."

Brent Davis is public information manager at the University of Alabama Center for Public Television and Radio.

Helen Norris, Alabama's Most Literary Lady

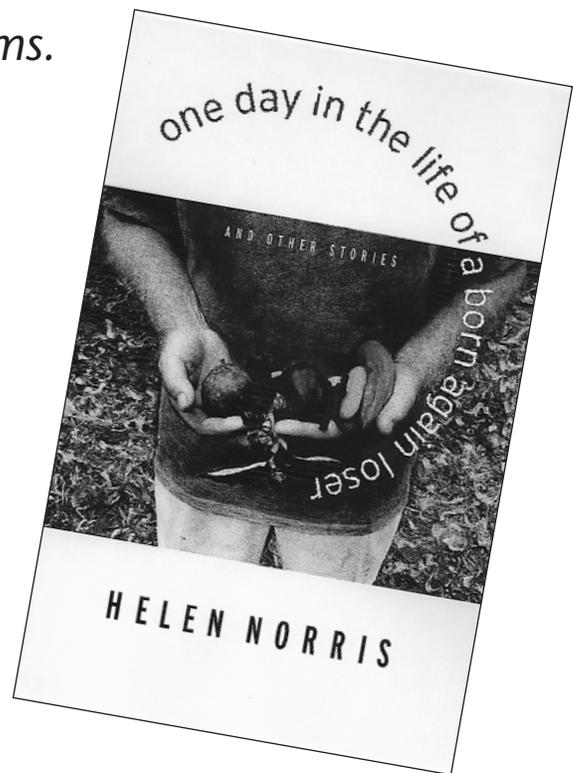
The state's Poet Laureate is a skilled practitioner of many literary forms.

by Julia Oliver

Some time in the late 1950s or early '60s, Helen Norris, a.k.a. Helen Bell, beamed encouragement as I presented a program to a literary club in my hometown of Sylacauga, Alabama. I recall how lovely she looked that afternoon, with her enviable complexion and dark auburn hair. Around the tea table, talk was of how proud her fellow club members were that Helen had recently published a novel. "Recently," of course, could mean any time in the last few years. The book was *For the Glory of God* (Macmillan, 1958); as one of the white-gloved ladies said, there could not be a better title. Actually, it was Helen Norris's second novel, *Something More Than Earth*, which had been her thesis for an M.A. degree at the University of Alabama, had been published by Atlantic-Little Brown in 1940, before she married and moved to Sylacauga.

Having grown up in Montgomery where her family owned a large turkey ranch, Helen adapted easily to life in a smaller town. Gregarious by nature, she loved being a wife, mother, friend, and neighbor. Then as now, she was bonded to the Episcopal Church. Her artistic calling has had a lot of competition. In 1965, she did graduate work at Duke University. A year later, after her divorce, she came home to Montgomery and joined the English Department faculty at Huntingdon College. In 1979, she retired from teaching to write.

By the mid-1980s, when I really got to know her, Helen was publishing breath-taking, impeccably-crafted stories in journals such as *The Sewanee Review*, *Shenandoah*, and *The Southern Review*, where they would garner laurels that included four O. Henry Awards and a



Pushcart Prize. Her credits include two chapbooks of poetry, *Whatever Is Round* (Curbow Publications, 1994) and *Rain Pulse* (Timberline Press, 1997), but her most significant work so far is in the realm of short fiction. Three collections—*The Christmas Wife* (The University of Illinois Press, 1985), *Water Into Wine* (The University of Illinois Press, 1988), and *The Burning Glass* (LSU Press, 1992)—soon will be joined by a fourth: *One Day in the Life of a Born-Again Loser And Other Stories* is due out in May from the University of Alabama Press.

The Christmas Wife received a coveted PEN/Faulkner nomination. Two of her stories have been made into television movies. This lifelong Alabama resident is unsur-

passed in capturing the terrain of the deep South—nothing could top *The Cracker Man*—but she also writes vividly and convincingly of distant locales. *The Burning Glass* contains stories placed in Poland and Vietnam. *Walk With the Sickle Moon* (Birch Lane Press, 1989), her fourth and latest novel, is set in France.

When I interviewed Helen in the late summer of 1993, she had just returned from a conference on mind-body healing. The previous December, she had attended the centennial of *The Sewanee Review* where she was honored with Shelby Foote, George Garrett, and Andrew Lytle. In February, 1993, at the Library of Congress, she recorded her story which had aired on NPR's *The Sound of Writing*. My final question that day was: "Aside from talent and discipline, what faculty should a writer strive to develop?"

The answer came without hesitation. "Taste. Writers must learn to recognize when they've gone too far, or not far enough. You want to elicit reaction from the reader, but without shooting yourself in the foot. Taste is the ability to match up actions with emotions."

She has said her prose often falls into iambic pentameter. The following excerpts from her work demonstrate how symbiotic in style and flow her prose and poetry can be. What could be a line of a poem is actually from a story, and vice versa:

"The rain went off somewhere in the night and left the leaves for her to see in the morning light, pressed against the screen." (From the story *Water into Wine*.)

"Day by day I lose the look of you... / I know the holding and release,/ The taste of things you whisper./



Helen Norris (left) on the set of *The Cracker Man* with actor Patrick Cranshaw (center) and co-producer John DiJulio.

Katie Lamar Smith

They are mellow yet astringent/ Like persimmons after frost.../ Day by day I lose the way you look." (From the poem "Grief.")

"... never pausing till he reached the small curl of dough in the center, moist and dark with cinnamon, he neatly detached this final nugget, this crux, this ultimate thing redolent of sugar and spice, and popped it into his open mouth." (From the story *White Hyacinths*.)

"The light on the field was turning blue./ The wood was tensing up for the night,/ Waiting to be a place for things/ That had no other place to be." (From the poem "Conjure Woman.")

Mentor to some and supportive colleague of many, Helen is an enthusiastic participant in the Kitchen Poets, Pen Women, the Alabama Poetry Society, and the Alabama Writers' Conclave, which recently selected her as the state's sixth Poet Laureate. In May, at the Alabama Writers Symposium in Monroeville, she was honored as the third recipient of the Harper Lee Award for Distinguished Alabama Writer.

A recent piece in the *New Yorker* describes her contemporary, the English novelist Penelope Fitzgerald, as being at the peak of her career. I don't see Helen Norris's powers as having peaked. I see her continuing to wear her years lightly as she forges ahead to even loftier levels. She looks to me much as she did that day over forty years ago, at a gathering of white-gloved ladies in a small Alabama town.

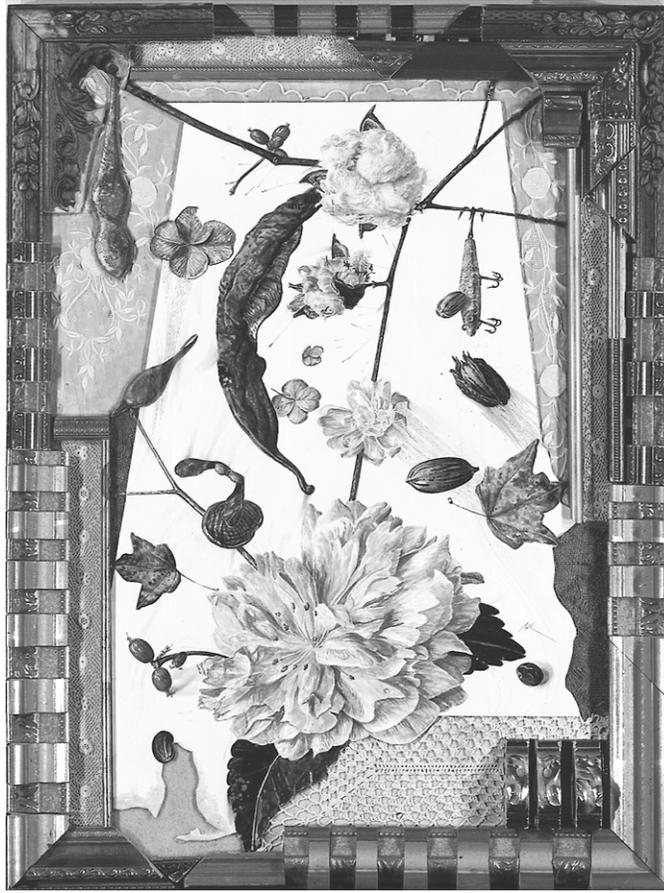
Julia Oliver, a Montgomery writer, is the author of two books of fiction, numerous articles, essays, and reviews.

REMEMBERED GOLD

When all is told, the final word
Is whispering the first...
This autumn leaf is but
remembering
Its early April gold.
That tender leaf was but an echo
Of this copper gone to amber
That we rake and heap for lying in
And staring at the old new
yellow moon.
Overhead the winter boughs
Have whipped the moon to
meadow bloom
And spread it on the pasture
In its winter sleep.
And something in the barest
bough
Is laughing at our love,
This new love but a handful
Of remembered gold.

Helen Norris

Reprinted from *Rain Pulse, Poems by Helen Norris* (Timberline Press, 1997)



Nall

International Exposure for Alabama's Visual Artists

by Elizabeth Via Brown

*Painters, Sculptors, Photographers and a Quilter
Say "Oui" to Exhibition in France*

True to one tourism slogan, Alabama is a state of surprises. As much as it is a state of genteel Southern confederates, it is also a state of mind, in which talented artists develop the skills to gain national and international appreciation for their contributions.

Brought together in *Alabama Art 2000*, works by thirteen artists from Alabama will be shown for the first time May 23, 2000, in the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, then travel to Vence, France to hang from August through September. Assembled by international artist Nall, with the patronage of Crown Prince Albert of Monaco, the display of widely divergent talent will end its Montgomery showing on June 18, so that it might travel to France to hang in the Museum of the N.A.L.L. Art Association. The exhibition promises to be as varied as are the artists, whose mediums range from photography, pen and ink, sculpture, garden design and etchings to crudely fashioned pictures on cardboard hung from soda can tabs.

Included in the exhibition are works by William Christenberry, a photographer and sculptor from Tuscaloosa; Chip Cooper, photographer, a native of Huntsville; Charlie Lucas, a sculptor and painter of Prattville; sculptor Frank Fleming from Bear Creek; Bill Nance, a painter and sculptor from Pulaski, Tennessee, now in Huntsville; Clifton Pearson of Birmingham, a sculptor; Steve Skidmore, a painter from Birmingham; painter Jimmy Lee Sudduth of Fayette; Mose Tolliver of Montgomery, a painter; photographer Flemming Tyler Wilson; quiltmaker Yvonne Wells of Tuscaloosa, and Kathryn Tucker Windham, a journalist and photographer from Selma. The collection also includes paintings and sculptures by Nall, a native of Pike County, Alabama.

Nall Hollis comes from Southern small town traditionalism, that of Troy, but during his adolescent education at the University of Alabama (in art, political science and psychology), he gained a larger view of the world and the courage to create. In 1970, he went to Paris to study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, and became known throughout Europe as both a porcelain artist and a watercolorist. He held an artist-in-residency at the University of Alabama in 1999, which was followed by a Fulbright scholarship to travel and study in Turkey. He and his wife Tuscia maintain a home in Vence, France, an area that has always drawn artists—Picasso, Matisse, Chagall, Léger, and Renoir all spent time there.

Known professionally by only his first name, Nall embraces an aestheticism that spans the centuries. And, although immersed in his own brand of interpretive paintings and sculpture, he has not forgotten his roots and looks home to Alabama for inspiration. Nor has the artist forgotten his fellow Alabamians. He and Tuscia have established an art association in Vence to encourage and sponsor young artists and promote cultural exchange between France and the United States. Named the Nature, Art and Life League, with the acronym of “N.A.L.L.,” the association includes literary and musical as well as visual artists. Nall and Tuscia have painstakingly restored nine of ten free-standing studios that were on the wooded property they purchased; they have also installed a print-making studio and a museum where artists can create and exhibit their work, as well as hear and give lectures, concerts and plays. It is to this museum that the work of these thirteen Alabamians will travel in August.

AN INTERNATIONAL VENUE FOR ALABAMA

“The immense amount of artistic talent in Alabama deserves to be shown to the rest of the world, and Nall is just the person to do it,” says Lori Allen Siegelman, Alabama’s First Lady and honorary president of the foundation’s branch in the United States. Members of the board include such names as musician Ringo Starr and his wife, actress Barbara Bach, Princess Beatriz d’Orleans-Borbon and the Duchess of Bedford. Also serving are Dr. Jack Hawkins, chancellor of the Troy State University System in Troy and his wife Janice Hawkins, and Al Head, executive director of the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

“*Alabama Art 2000* reflects the essence of creative expression that originates in the state. The works speak for themselves and epitomize Alabama’s rich cultural environment,” said Head, who is, like Nall, a native of Troy.

“Nall knows in his bones that his fellow artists have been nurtured by rich soil,” Head continued. “He has heard their creative voices and has now given that resonating sound a much larger stage.”



William Christenberry

VARIETY IN ARTISTIC TECHNIQUES

“The participating artists were selected because their techniques, work ethic and sensitivity to human sentiments represent all aspects of Alabama’s art,” said Nall. “We will present Alabama from its roots to its leaves. The collection merges the works of self-taught “outsider” artists with those by trained artists, photographers, and sculptors to create a unique slice of life in Alabama.”

William Christenberry interprets the South in his drawings, paintings, sculpture and photography. Trained as an abstract expressionist in the 1950s, he lives in Washington, D.C., where he became a teacher at the Corcoran School of Art in 1968. Influenced by early Pop Art, he converted to representationalism when he began photographing familiar scenes of home. His photos and sculptures of buildings in Alabama comprise an extended study of vernacular architecture of the rural South. He has received numerous awards, including the Guggenheim memorial fellowship, and his work is included in museums and private collections.

A native of Huntsville, **Chip Cooper** received a degree in political science from the University of



Chip Cooper



Frank Fleming

Alabama in 1972, but his postgraduate work focused on photography. He is employed by the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa and is the director of photography for *Alabama Heritage* magazine. Cooper has received more than 150 national and state awards for his work. His photos have appeared in *Newsweek*, *USA Today*, *the New York Times* and the *Village Voice*. His first book, *Hunting—a Southern Tradition*, was published in 1988. Chip Cooper was the recipient of a Fellowship Grant from the Alabama State Council on the Arts in 1993, and was given the Award of Excellence by *Communication Arts* magazine in 1994.

Sculptor **Frank Fleming**, the son of a corn and cotton farmer from Bear Creek, began his career working in white porcelain. Although bronze is now his material of choice, he continues to make the anthropomorphic frogs, birds, lizards and other creatures that have peopled his imagination from the beginning. His creatures often combine human and animal features, and carry an imaginative, complex symbolism. Included in numerous public and private collections, Fleming’s work is also in the



Charlie Lucas

national collection at the Smithsonian Institution. He received a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of Alabama and has been awarded the Distinguished Alabama Artist Award, the highest recognition given by the Alabama State Council on the Arts.

Using recycled metals, **Charlie Lucas** of Prattville creates sculptures and paintings that reflect his conscience and views of worldly issues. His work is often



Bill Nance



Clifton Pearson

spiritual, and contains a gentle sense of humor while demonstrating his compassion for mankind.

Although born in Tennessee, garden designer **Bill Nance** has been in Alabama since he studied at the University of Alabama, where he received Bachelor's and Master's degrees in fine arts. He approaches his plans as if they were three-dimensional paintings, incorporating all the elements and principals of design. He borrows from Greco-Roman architecture and from the gardens of the Chinese Ming Dynasty to create tightly structured, well-planned Southern themes that also imply an impish sense of humor. He is a professor at Alabama A&M in Huntsville, as well as a painter and sculptor. He has been given two National Endowment for the Humanities fellowships and has participated in four Fulbright programs abroad.

Clifton Pearson is a native of Birmingham, but has spent most of his life in Huntsville, either studying or teaching art. Currently, he is the artist-in-residence at Alabama A&M, where he was a member of the teaching



Steve Skidmore

faculty for twenty-five years. A sculptor, his works in

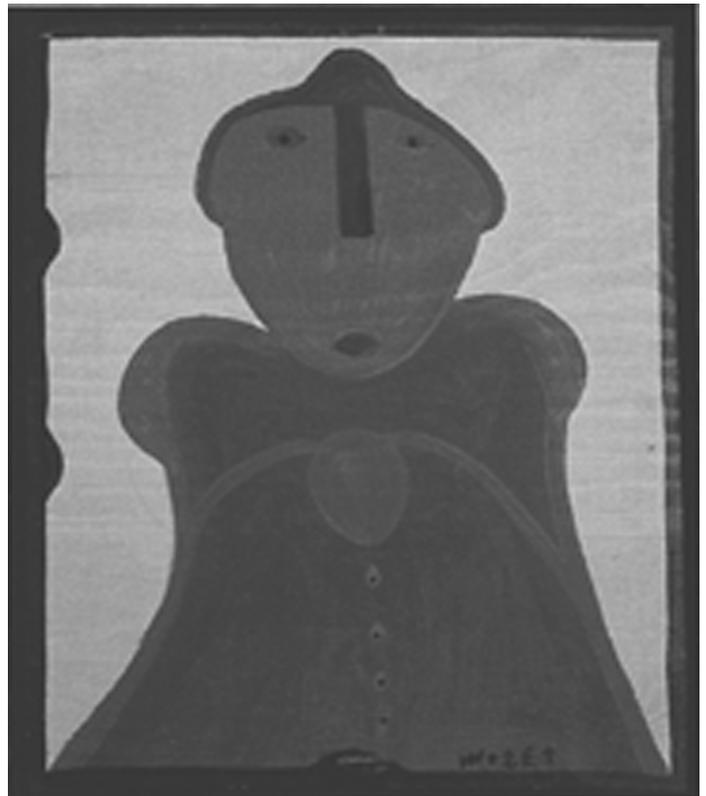


Jimmy Lee Sudduth

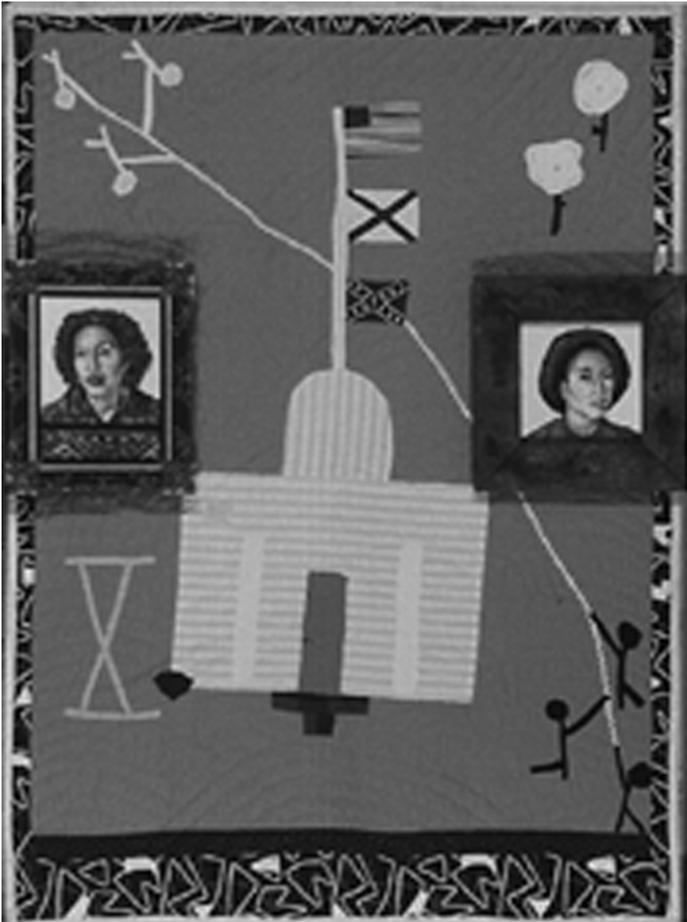
ceramic and glass have been exhibited mostly in the Southeast and combine highly stylized figures with the gesture and attitude of real human presence. His appreciation of refined texture was inspired by classical African influences.

The only artist to be included posthumously is **Steve Skidmore**, not yet fifty years old when he died in 1999. A painter born in Birmingham, he was an architectural draftsman before going to Venice to study etching with Nall. He listed as an influence his father, a sign painter who had studied lettering.

Using sugar, mud, sand, honey and maybe a little



Mose Tolliver



Yvonne Wells

Coca-Cola, **Jimmy Lee Sudduth** of Fayette is a folk artist who paints subjects which are familiar to him, concentrating on architecture and nature. Instead of a brush, he paints with his index finger and thumb—to draw thin lines, he uses his fingernail. He has also devised at least 36 different shades of mud, expanding his color palette by mixing in coffee grounds, ashes and axle grease. Although he still prefers to use natural materials as paint, he is now incorporating house paint into his technique.

Mose Tolliver, or “Mose T.,” of Montgomery, is, like Sudduth, a folk artist. After an accident left him unable to work, he taught himself how to paint and uses cardboard, scraps of wood, metal trays, old furniture, Masonite boards and anything else he can get his hands on as canvas for his colorful, often crude, paintings. More often than not, he uses tab openers from soda and beer cans as the hangers for his paintings.

Yvonne Wells’s quilts all tell stories. Each quilt is different from any other she has made, because each is a picture of an event or a series of symbols that relate a specific incident. Mrs. Wells lives in Tuscaloosa and has continued to teach for more than thirty years, although she began her work as an artist twenty years ago. She



Fleming Tyler Wilson

began making quilts in 1979 and has exhibited her work in Canada and Japan, as well as in the United States. She has won the “Best of Show” award at the famous Kentucky Festival in Northport, Alabama several times.

Fleming Tyler Wilson, also of Tuscaloosa, is a photographer who lived in Chicago for thirty years, studying at DePaul University, the Art Institute of Chicago, and Chicago’s Columbia College. He returned home to the South via a teaching position at the University of Alabama, in the art department. He expresses his technique: “I stay out of the photograph until the individual is either relaxed or agitated enough so that they look right past me, and they’re then confronting the person who will

BOOK TO ACCOMPANY EXHIBITION

The artists of the exhibition will be featured in a catalog, *Alabama Art 2000*, with commentary from Alabama First Lady Lori Allen Siegelman, Prince Albert of Monaco, writers Fannie Flagg and Pulitzer Prize winner Rick Bragg, as well as other luminaries of the Alabama arts community.

Alabama's own Fannie Flagg, an actress and the author of *Fried Green Tomatoes* (a Southern-flavored novel made into a movie of the same name), writes in her introduction to the book that the state and its artists deserve to be taken seriously and are just now taking their rightful place in the New South.

"Alabamians have something to prove to the rest of the art world," says Flagg. "There is an emerging excitement in the state, like a newborn struggling to break through the eggshell, to spread our wings and fly higher and farther than ever before."

In his preface to the exhibition catalog, Rick Bragg, newspaper reporter and novelist from Alabama, says, "I used to believe that I came from a place without art... I'm a grown man now, and I know better. I know I just wasn't looking hard enough.

"Art was in the quilts my grandmother sewed from scrap, turning other people's leavings into precious keepsakes. It was in the stories my uncles told on the front porch, their words painting as rich and as vivid a portrait as any oils ever could.

"It was in the baskets and fish nets the old men and women weaved, the patterns as delicate as spider webs, and in the cornices and lattices my uncles carved and hammered into place, hanging from ladders, nails between their teeth... This collection contains a little bit of everything, from artists whose works have hung in Paris, to artists whose works have hung on the back porch."

The book is due out from Black Belt Press in May. Retail price will be \$49.50 for the 128-page, 10-inch by 10-inch full-color volume.



Kathryn Tucker Windham

look at this photograph. My photography expresses the state of the world to show humanity something of itself..."

Kathryn Tucker Windham worked as a journalist for four decades from the Great Depression through the Civil Rights Movement in Selma, where she now resides. Taking photographs all the while, she left journalism in the 1970s to write books, most notably about ghosts of Alabama, and became a professional storyteller. In 1993, she exhibited her first collection of photographs, a crowning achievement for a hobby that was begun when she was given a camera in an Eastman Kodak promotion as a twelve-year-old.

BON JOUR, MON AMI!

Mark Johnson, the executive director of the Montgomery Museum of Fine Arts, who collaborated with Nall to assemble *Alabama Art 2000*, said the exhibit is unhindered by geography or language.

"The works represent the intellectual inquiry, technical facility and creative spirit consistent with the best in contemporary expression," he said. "Whether in Alabama or France, such images are universal in their appeal."

Elizabeth Via Brown is a freelance writer living in Montgomery, where she is the social columnist for the Montgomery Advertiser.



ALABAMA

THE HEART OF COMMUNICATION:

In a 1995 essay, Microsoft magnate and torchbearer of the Information Age, Bill Gates, made a startling prediction. “The Internet,” he wrote, “is a tidal wave. It will wash over the computer industry and many others, drowning out those who don’t learn to swim in its waves.” Gates’ prediction was not so much prescience as it was projection based on overwhelming data. The first graphics-based web browser, “Mosaic,” had been introduced only two years before in 1992, but the Internet was already expanding by colossal proportions, at a rate greater than three hundred thousand percent per year. By 1996, there were

an estimated forty million people in 150 countries connected to the Internet.

Today, the number has grown so nebulous that no accurate count can be made. However, the number of users is generally believed to exceed one hundred million, and the number of personal web sites alone exceeds ten million, with one estimate of an additional fourteen million commercial, educational, and organizational web sites. There is little doubt that we are now living in a global community operating in a new age, an age so revolutionary as to be compared without hyperbole to a life-changing

occurrence, such as Gutenberg’s invention of movable type in 1454. And in this Information Age, Gates’ sink-or-swim proposition seems to grow more valid with each minute ticking away in real time.

The onset of the Information Age has not been without trepidation. Many are concerned about the perceived impersonal nature of the Internet; art patrons and artists alike have wondered whether art can be reconciled with megabytes and pixels. That concern has been addressed partly by a steady growth of art and cultural organizations going online while remaining firmly in line with their missions and their constituent-

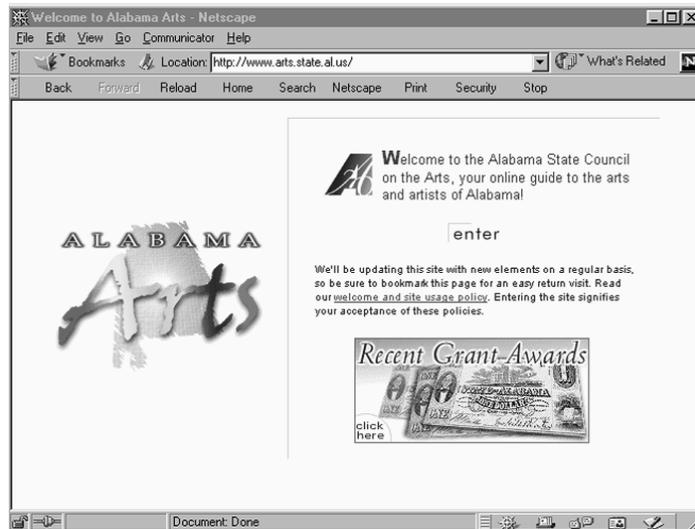
Art in the Information Age

cies. The Alabama State Council on the Arts launched its first web site in 1997, and there are currently more than one hundred Alabama art and cultural organizations with a presence on the Web, providing information on their activities, schedules, and services. For a complete listing of links visit the "Arts and Artists" section of the ASCA website. Certainly the Web's value as an educational and promotional tool has been apparent from the start, but it is gradually emerging as both a new marketplace and a new medium for the arts.

WIDENING THE NET, NARROWING THE DIVIDE

"The Internet is no longer just a toy of young to middle-aged affluent males," says Dan Martin, Director of the Master of Arts Management program and the Center for Arts Management Technology at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh. "We're seeing a dissolution of the 'digital divide' that everybody talked about several years ago. Art organizations must realize they have to serve their patrons and audiences through this new technology, just as they do through the phone book, newspapers, print materials, and every other communication tool that's out there."

Fortunately, the Alabama State Council on the Arts realized the role of the Internet more than five years ago, when the Web was in its infancy,



Many opportunities open up for the arts in the world-wide web of the Internet.

and has continued to encourage the presence of Alabama arts groups online. The Council has been working with five other state arts agencies and several national organizations, (including the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies and the Center for Arts Management Technology at Carnegie Mellon University) to develop a user-friendly online cultural events calendar. Recently released for public use, the calendar may be accessed from any page on the Council's website at www.arts.state.al.us, or by going directly to the calendar at www.al.artscal.org.

"Using the Internet for such ends can be a very transformative experience for arts organizations," says Kelly Barksdale, Information Services Director, National Assembly of State Arts Agencies. "It's great that the Alabama Council on the Arts has taken such a leadership role in making the arts more visible and making administration more efficient."

A NEW MARKETPLACE

The possibilities go beyond merely promoting arts and cultural events; the net may also be a vehicle for promoting

the artists themselves and for showcasing their work. Martin speculates that a "service could be created for unrepresented artists, a way to get their name out there and market their work, as well. As the technology is getting better, we get a richer view of the work than would've been possible even a couple of years ago."

The Arts Council is realizing at least the first phase of that idea.

Planned for release in late summer is a major addition to the Council's website, the Alabama Artists Directory. The Directory will initially be composed of more than fifty pages of information on Alabama's performing, literary, and visual artists who have received fellowships and other recognition from the Council. Al Head, Director of the Arts Council, explains the need for such a service. "Alabama artists can hold their own with work being done anywhere in the world. We don't want our artists to continue being a "best kept secret." The Internet provides an avenue into virtually every part of the world. A much broader audience needs to be appreciative of the work of Alabama artists. If the Council can help facilitate opening that door for artists, that will be an important breakthrough."

A NEW MEDIUM

Besides promoting arts events and showcasing artists' work, the net also serves artists in a more fundamental way. For many artists today, the technology has become a medium in itself, a medium as fraught with possibility as paper, canvas, or clay.



Mike Walz, systems engineer with ASD of Alabama and designer of the ASCA's web site, points out, "No matter what parameters you have to work under as a graphic artist, you're still basically trying to create something you could make on paper or that you could paint. You're just using a different medium."

The Information Age has spawned a new artistic genre, a new artist brushing a screen from a digital pallet. But the digital artist is, at heart, the artist from any age; his work is not just a matter of keystrokes and technical prowess, but of those timeless abilities which allow an artist to effectively communicate through any medium. "A good graphic artist knows not only the tools but the classic principles of art," says Walz. "Anyone can learn to use Photoshop, but to create something artistic with it is to understand principles like color, design, and balance. In the same way, the fact that I'm proficient with Microsoft Word and could use it to write a 500-page novel doesn't mean that novel is going to be any good."

A NEW HORIZON

What lies ahead for the arts community, having taken and gained

momentum from those first tentative steps on the information super-highway? Kelly Barksdale observes that arts organizations on the whole are shaping agendas for bigger and better programming and are viewing technology simply as the vehicle for fulfilling those agendas. "What I see happening more and more among arts organizations is that they're not looking at technology as an end in itself. Technology happens to be, incidentally, a means to another end, to a management goal, an artistic goal, a creative goal."

As arts and cultural organizations continue meeting those goals, the public will be the beneficiary of this new marketplace and medium. Interestingly, the technology has not only a direct effect on promoting arts events but, as some argue, a paradoxical effect as well. Dan Martin feels that "people are, in a sense, cocooning themselves with all these electronic gizmos and we crave a communal experience. I read a report recently that cited a dramatic increase in attendance at festivals, large events, and live performances, an increase which some sociologists attribute simply to the need to get out of the

'cocoon' and be around other folks, interact with others personally."

As a means to a "creative goal," and to promoting a "communal experience," the Internet, for all its code and mainframes, remains firmly fixed on the human element. So in considering art's place in the revolutionary "tidal wave" of technology, the art community might also consider the statement of Southern writer William Alexander Percy in his 1941 memoir *Lanterns on the Levee*:

"Only one thing never changes—the human heart. Revolutions... may lacerate it, even break it, but they can never change its essence... [T]hat same headstrong human heart will forever be clamoring for the old things it wept for Eden..."

It is art that embodies those "old things," and it is art that truly communicates those yearnings. For that reason, if for no other, art councils and artists striving to establish a presence on the Net will not merely be treading water, but making waves of their own.

This report was compiled by Bill Bates of the Alabama State Council on the Arts and written by Tucker Dillard.

THE VIRTUES OF THE VIRTUAL: ONLINE LIBRARIES

Even in the midst of the Information Age, there is little doubt in the minds of most that the ritual and hallmarks of a “good read” will ever fall into disfavor—the weathered cover, the dog-eared pages and scribbled notes, the splintering spine. However, as technology advances, the benefits of virtual libraries are becoming increasingly apparent, particularly to teachers and students of literature. The following are two online libraries which demonstrate the richness of such resources.

Project Gutenberg (www.promo.net/pg) is an expansive online library that boasts literally thousands of pieces of literature from all periods up to the early twentieth century—from the canonical works of Shakespeare, Dante, and Melville to the popular works of Arthur Conan Doyle,

Edgar Rice Burroughs, and Lewis Carroll. This library was the brainchild of a computer technician named Michael Hart who, in 1971 (a year that is nothing short of Precambrian in terms of the Information Age) had the grandiose idea of making such texts freely available to practically everyone around the globe.

clopedias, almanacs, biographical sources, and the full texts of books and magazines. Funded by the state, the AVL will be delivered online to computers in public schools, community colleges, four-year colleges, and public libraries across Alabama.



Thirty years later, technology caught up with Hart's vision and Project Gutenberg publishes an average of one “e-text” every day.

Alabama Virtual Library (www.avl.lib.al.us) is a recent innovation spearheaded by state and local educational organizations and managed by the Alabama Public Library Service. The AVL offers students, teachers, and library patrons the means to research art, literature and other topics using simple search strategies, including keyword searching, across a vast library of ency-

Exhibition Schedule

Alabama Artists Gallery

May 4—June 9

Alabama Arts 2000: Portraits.

Nall has painted portraits of the 13 artists included in this international showcase.

June 14—July 6

A Mark in Time:

Masterworks of Contemporary Alabama Craft

This touring exhibition, part of the celebration, Alabama Craft/2000, features the work of 40 artists.

August 9—September 6

A Lifetime in Art: The Works of Nathan Glick

September 10—November 2

Celebrating the Vision: Self-Taught Artists of Alabama

This touring exhibition features the work of 21 artists.

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.

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