

Alabama Craft: Tradition and Innovation

Project

Alabama Public Television support to help (a) film, edit and air an APT-produced, two-hour, high-definition documentary, ***Alabama Craft***, featuring Alabama's master folk artists and (b) create free Web-based educational resources for teaching art and Alabama history courses.

Significance/Objective/Audiences

The ***Alabama Craft*** documentary will highlight the contribution of Alabama's traditional and contemporary visual folk artists with the objective of disseminating the film and related educational material to the general public through APT's on-air broadcasts, DVD distributions and online curriculum resources for K-12 instruction, **APTPLUS™**. As part of the Alabama State Council on the Arts' exhibition, the documentary is expected to be included in the 2010 Smithsonian Folklife Festival, which attracts an annual audience of more than two million national and international visitors. In that year, Alabama will be among the featured artists and exhibitions during the 10-day event.

Documentary Treatment

Alabama Craft will showcase Alabama's traditional, contemporary and innovative crafts and artisans. Craft forms reviewed included studio-trained and community-trained artists working in the mediums of clay, fiber, glass, metals and wood. Ten artists were considered for the documentary. Of these, seven were selected for inclusion in the film: potters Jerry Brown and Charles Smith; quilters Mozell Benson and Bettye Kimbrell; glass blower Cal Breed; instrument maker Gene Ivey; and blacksmith John Phillips. "Their work draws on ... a sense of place and story, and their art shows a deep connection to Alabama that reveals a commonality to our shared experience," says Andrew Grace, the producer.

APT cameras followed the selected artists and explored the creative process from conception to the selection of materials and hands-on work. The documentary series (two one-hour films) will consist of three visual components: interviews conducted in the artists' work space; action scenes of the artists working; and shots of the artists' communities – the cultural environs in which each works. Viewers of the ***Alabama Craft*** will learn how these master artists work, why they make their objects in the manner they do and how the indigenous social, cultural, historical and physical environment of Alabama infuses their art.

The ***Alabama Craft*** documentary will be a work of art in itself – both in terms of the subject and process. By tapping the combined expertise of the Alabama State Council on the Arts and APT, the documentary will creatively and effectively combine the knowledge and skills of Alabama's visual arts with the network's on-air and online technology. Alabama Public Television will

- contribute the staff and technical resources to make the documentary;
- produce DVD copies for distribution to Alabama's educators, schools and cultural organizations (museums and festivals) and the public at large;
- promote the film through its broadcast, Web, and print media; and
- produce related online educational material correlated to state standards for teaching art and Alabama history courses.

*Note: APT broadcasts reach more 4.4 million viewers. More than 76% of the state's public school teachers use **APTPLUS™**, a free, Web-based resource.*

In addition, the **Alabama Craft** documentary and Web materials will enhance Alabama's contribution to the **National Endowment for the Arts' American Masterpiece** program. More importantly, audiences seeing the documentary will discover the rich artistic heritage and contemporary culture of Alabama as will Alabama teachers and students who use the related online resources.

APT Key Personnel

Chris Holmes, executive producer, has earned four regional Emmy Awards for his work on APT films *Mr. Dial Has Something to Say* and *WWI: Alabama Remembers*. Before joining APT, Holmes had an extensive career as a freelance filmmaker, including work on an Oscar-nominated short film, feature and documentary films, television shows, commercials, and music videos.

The works of Andrew Grace, producer, include recent documentaries, *The Fullness of Time* and *Backstage*, and films, among others, commissioned and produced for the Wyoming Humanities Council. Grace teaches a class, Documenting Justice, at the University of Alabama.

J. Whitson, production manager, has worked on numerous APT-produced films including the 2006 Emmy-nominated *Alabama Ballet: The Making of Romeo and Juliet*, the 2007 Emmy Award-winning films, *Justice Without Violence: the Montgomery Bus Boycott* and *Thornton Dial*, and the 2008 Emmy Award-winning *WWII: Alabama Remembers*.

Nancy Hill, APT's vice president for educational services, will oversee the online educational content. Her expertise includes online technology applications for teaching and learning.

Project Time Line

Production (research, interviews, and filming of artists) occurred during the summer. Post production (editing, sound and color enhancements, etc.) are occurring now. A pre-broadcast premiere will occur in March of 2009 with the first on-air broadcast to occur in April. As with previous APT-produced documentaries, three broadcasts of the **Alabama Craft** will occur within 12 months of the premiere broadcast and in following years as appropriate. Development and launch of the related Web content would follow the same schedule as the documentary.

Project Budget

The total projected budget for the **Alabama Craft** project is \$XXXXXX. These expenses include research, production and editing (\$XXXXX); DVD copies of the documentary, promotion, marketing and a premiere event (\$XXXXX); creation of Web-based resources for teaching art and Alabama history courses (\$XXXXX); and legal, royalties and contingency fees (\$XXXXX).

Historically, APT funds 25% to 50% of a documentary project. For **Alabama Craft**, the network will contribute 33%, or \$XXXXXX, of the total cost. Additionally, the network has commitments totaling 47%, or \$XXXXXX for the project. Gifts totaling \$XXXXX are needed to fully support all elements of the project, i.e. documentary, marketing, premiere event and **APTPLUS™** digital content.

Of the four elements, financial support for the documentary and digital content for K-12 instruction are the most important. Assuming full-funding for the project is secured, a special premiere will be held in conjunction with the Alabama State Council on the Arts to honor the artists and donors and to celebrate the rich culture of Alabama's master artists.