



TRADITION || INNOVATION

American Masterpieces of Southern Craft & Traditional Art

VISITORS' GUIDE



For Families and Educators:

Here are some points to consider and discuss with children as you visit this exhibit:

- These artists work with their hands, eyes and minds, but each does it differently. Some hold the materials in their hands as they work with it in a special way for a long time, feeling and molding the piece. What materials do you think you would like to work with? How would they feel in your hands?
- The work of traditional artists preserves the heritage of a family or community. By practicing and passing on their skills, traditional artists honor their heritage. What traditions exist in your family or your community? Who do you know that practices a traditional skill, whether it is crafts, music, cooking, gardening or some other tradition?
- The works of contemporary craft artists often raise as many questions as they answer. What questions do you have about the work you have seen?
- Craft objects have a life span of their own, just like the antiques you see on television. Try to imagine the life of one of the artworks in this exhibit. Why was it made? What will happen to it after this exhibit? What will it be used for by its future owner(s)?
- The works in this exhibit are considered to be masterworks by master craft artists. Each of them has a different idea of what mastery means, but they all recognize that it is more than just being skillful. It also involves individual creativity and the willingness to pass on what you have learned. What does mastery mean to you? Who do you know that you consider a master at something?

To see many more photos, artist bios and interviews, links and learning/teaching activities, visit www.traditioninnovation.org and learn more about these artists and masterpieces.

“One can master the methods and play the piano, but to make music requires something else.”

So says Richard Jolley, one of the artists in *Tradition/Innovation*. It is an observation that goes to the heart of being a master craft artist, as it reflects that special accomplishment many aspire to, but relatively few are able to achieve. Those accomplishments are as diverse as the artists themselves, and they are testament to the rich and vibrant role of craft within the Southern region of the United States.



Tradition/Innovation: American Masterpieces of Southern Craft & Traditional Art is a project of the Southern Arts Federation, and is supported in part by an award from the National Endowment for the Arts, which believes that a great nation deserves great art.

Cover Artwork: *White Oak Basket* by Mary Jane Prater, photo by Luis Quiles

Welcome to the exhibit . . .


Tradition/Innovation: American Masterpieces of Southern Craft & Traditional Art, presented by the Southern Arts Federation. In this exhibit you'll experience masterworks representing both the traditional arts and contemporary crafts of Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee. In this exhibit there are artists whose work continues an ongoing tradition and whose mastery of the process and materials invites a deeper appreciation of that craft. Other artists use established materials, techniques or processes as a springboard for innovation and the starting point for advancing their own ideas about what art is in our restless, contemporary world.

Binding all of these artists together is a deep knowledge and respect of what art can be for the artist and of what art can offer the viewer – be that a handsome functional object, a reflective oasis, a shared insight or a challenge to the status quo.

This guide is a vehicle for you to explore and experience more deeply 10 of the artworks, and learn about the artists who created them. Within the four themes in this exhibit – **Cultural Practice**, **Relationship to Place**, **Innovation and Evolution**, and **Connections** – are reflections of ways these selected artists fit into the broader world of art and community. These themes are doors into a deeper understanding of the artworks and the artists themselves.

***Tradition/Innovation* invites you to absorb and celebrate the mastery of these selected traditional artists and contemporary craft artists of the Southern region.**

CULTURAL PRACTICE

Traditional craft artists see themselves as a kind of cultural anchor that helps to keep a particular cultural heritage alive. By continuing an established craft tradition, these artists see their works as having deep cultural connections both for themselves and for those who use them. Their creations are not just well-crafted objects, but also symbols of family heritage, cultural identity and artistic inheritance. 

To truly appreciate the diving helmets that Nick Toth creates, one has to understand the deep relationship he shared with his grandfather, Anthony Lerios, who immigrated to Tarpon Springs, Florida, in 1913. Lerios was an active member of the Greek community of sponge divers. A master mechanic, he kept some 100 sponge diving boats in working order. Along the way, he learned to build diving helmets and his shop became a touchstone for men who worked on the boats and dove for sponges. The shop was also a magnet for Lerios's grandson, Nick, and his grandfather gave him little jobs to do around the shop while the men conversed in Greek.

Over time, the small jobs that Lerios gave his grandson grew into bigger ones, and Nick Toth found himself hooked. "He taught me everything I know," Toth said. "He would put my hand on his hand so I could tell how much pressure was necessary to turn a bolt without breaking it. I'd put my hand on his hand when he was using the lathe. I learned everything I learned by feel." Even working into his 90's, Lerios would guide Toth's crafting of his copper, brass and plate glass helmets.

Nick Toth has maintained the tradition that intimately ties him to his grandfather. The irony of Toth's artistry is that as he has grown artistically and technically as a diving helmet maker, the very form of the diving helmet has been largely replaced by newer, lightweight equipment. But Toth has found a new and appreciative market among diving societies and collectors of maritime art and history, who display his helmets as works of occupational art. Nick Toth also provides helmets to divers working off California's coast. They are impressed with Toth's quality helmets, which they find outlast other helmets in the rough and cold waters where they dive. Toth was awarded a National Endowment for the Arts National Heritage Fellowship in 2003.

"I hope I will always make dive helmets," Toth said. "Even if it's one or two, that will be enough... I'm not just doing this for myself, but doing this to stand for something that my family was involved with, something that is part of our history as well as the town's."



Sponge Diving Helmet, 1986
Photo by Museum of Florida History, Department of State



"When I make them, I'll feel a connection to Tarpon Springs, to history and to my grandfather. That's something special."

*Nick Toth,
Tarpon Springs, FL*

Are there skills that you have learned from someone in your family, learned by "feel" as Nick learned to make helmets from his grandfather? What did you learn to do? Who taught you?



CULTURAL PRACTICE

Darryl Montana is a traditional artist who is inseparably tied to a rich cultural tradition found in the unique environment of New Orleans. As Chief Darryl J. Montana, he comes from a family and a community intimately involved in the Mardi Gras Indian tradition. Although his father, Chief Allison “Tootie” Montana was Chief of the Yellow Pocahontas Indian Tribe, Darryl Montana is not merely following in his father’s footsteps. While both men have made significant contributions to the artform of costuming and “masking,” Darryl has actively sought to expand his role within this tradition.

Montana’s view of himself within this craft heritage is that of an artist, a marked departure from earlier generations of African-Americans who developed and have maintained this tradition of Mardi Gras since the 1880’s. At its onset the Indian tradition was a way for African-Americans to participate in the Mardi Gras celebrations and to acknowledge the influence of Native American culture in their blended heritage. The tradition has been reinterpreted and re-invigorated by subsequent generations. Darryl Montana’s own artistry is blended with his experience as an educator and he has been able to effectively reach both a national and international audience in his efforts to educate others about this tradition.

In his costuming, each year Montana pushes himself to make his suits “bigger and better,” to the point that they now comprise up to 500 various-sized pieces of sequined and/or beaded fabric. Just as impressive is the dimensional aspect of his costumes, with the form of the headdresses and body costumes projecting out in a manner reminiscent of ancient Aztec ceremonial dress.

As impressive as Darryl Montana’s costumes are in their artistry, it is when he dons one that they truly come to life. “When a suit is on display, it’s like it’s entombed. . . It’s waiting to come back to life, and when you put it on, you have to play that suit, you have to bring the suit to life,” says Montana. The suit does indeed become one with Montana when he becomes Big Chief of the Yellow Pocahontas, and fellow members gather at his home to sing the traditional “Indian Red” song on the morning of Mardi Gras. At that point, not only does Darryl’s artistry find its zenith, he is at one with the community and heritage that he loves.



Mardi Gras Indian Chief Suit, 1998
Photo by Herbert Lotz. Courtesy of SITE Santa Fe.



“When I put my suit on, I live out my ancestors’ dreams.”

*Darryl Montana,
Kenner, LA*

What sort of clothes do you wear when you get dressed up?

How is choice of clothing a part of 21st century American celebrations such as a wedding or a graduation ceremony?



CULTURAL PRACTICE

Contemporary craft artists create works from a more consciously innovative perspective and they see the idea of “culture” from a decidedly different angle. These craft artists understand their creative work as proceeding from self-expression and a search for meaning within the “culture” of the contemporary world. For these artists, the primary creative impulse—the development of the ideas—is seen as the artist’s role within contemporary culture. Understandably, their work does not strictly adhere to a particular cultural tradition or practice.

Douglas Harling is a contemporary craft artist whose role within contemporary culture is to be found in both his creative work and in his teaching at the Kentucky School of Crafts in Hindman, Kentucky. An educational and economic initiative in eastern Kentucky, the school is still in its infancy compared to established schools like the Penland School of Crafts in North Carolina. Harling is one of the first instructors hired at the school, and he points out, “What we are doing here in Kentucky is really community development. It’s a twenty-year plan. Hopefully then we’ll see a flourishing crafts community.”

Harling’s own professional background serves him well in his teaching position as Master Artisan in Jewelry/Metalsmithing, for it is a pragmatic blend of business management, teaching and his creative work as an artist. Regarding his teaching, Harling notes,

“I think it’s important for those who have the skills to pass that on. In a sense, keeping the culture means to mentor, teach and pass on what you know. . . .”

Harling’s creative work is a similar blend of the pragmatic and the artistic. His mastery of the art of goldsmithing is reflective of both his scientific knowledge of metallurgy and his personal aesthetics regarding the qualities of metal relative to the human form. Says Harling, “When you deal with jewelry you’re dealing with Body Theater. You can and maybe should push it. Function is important but I reserve the right to ignore it in the end. I don’t often worry about it. It’s a starting point. Jewelry doesn’t exist off the body. Just because you haven’t seen it before doesn’t mean that it’s not possible. But you always start from the body.”



Full Measure Cup, 2006
Photo by Luis Quijles

“I’m not wedded to a specific way of working, but I feel like I’m not finished yet.”

*Douglas Harling,
Hindman, KY*

Why do you think artists consider it important to pass on their skills to others?

Why are the business skills that artists acquire important?

RELATIONSHIP TO PLACE

Traditional artists' sense of place is often most obvious in their knowledge of and sensitivity to their natural surroundings. For instance, their choices of materials are often not simply a matter of their chosen craft, but intrinsically linked to the natural environments in which the works are created. Likewise, for these craft artists, the imagery of their work is many times drawn from their local environments and cultures, be that animals and plant life or scenes of human activity in their particular region.



“You have to have your own feeling of what the animal or bird looks like.”

Virgil Ledford, Cherokee, NC

Virgil Ledford grew up hearing of his great-grandfather who “could carve anything he wanted,” so it’s no wonder that Ledford began carving as a child in Birdtown, North Carolina. He further developed his skills as he studied under Amanda Crowe, a distinguished Cherokee carver. Crowe encouraged him to develop his own unique style while still working within the Cherokee tradition. Both the training and the advice have served Ledford well. His work is in many public and private collections and one of his sculptures has become the official logo of the Museum of the Cherokee Indian in Cherokee, North Carolina.

The figures and animals Virgil Ledford carves from cherry, basswood, buckeye, walnut and cedar woods that come from a nearby sawmill, from neighbors and from the land around his house. He carefully observes the natural colors and patterns in the wood and integrates them into his design, whether he is carving a legendary Cherokee figure, a bear, an owl or a horse. In his artistic process, Ledford is very conscious of refining the design to convey his own interpretation of the particular animal or human form. As Ledford says, “You can’t carve like somebody else.”

Using a bandsaw and chisels, Ledford creates a rough form. From there, he uses a pocketknife to shape the piece and provide detailing. After using sandpaper to refine the form, he gives the wood a natural finish to bring out the grain and a soft glossy appearance. The results of this artistic process have allowed Ledford to make his living from his woodcarving. As he points out, “I didn’t know it was going to be my livelihood. It’s a God-given talent. I just made it work for me.”



Carved Bear, 2000 and Carved Horse, 1992
Photo by Litis Quiles

What animals do you relate to within your own environment?

How do you think the process of expressing the character of an animal is different from creating a totally realistic image of an animal?

RELATIONSHIP TO PLACE

“It ain’t no problem for me. I know what I am doing.”

Mary Jane Prater, McMinnville, TN

Mary Jane Prater has a matter-of-fact tone when she talks about her basketmaking, and her frankness is indicative of how she came to make traditional white oak baskets. Born in 1918 to a farm family that “raised everything we could,” she was keenly aware of the rewards that hard work and a focused purpose could provide. In addition to being farmers, her family also made baskets, ladder-back chairs and other crafts, so Mary Jane was familiar with the materials and the processes used to fabricate those pieces of furniture — and baskets. Not surprisingly, when she then encountered the process of making traditional white oak baskets, she shrewdly observed to herself, “I can do that and make some extra money.”

Mary Jane Prater’s advice to novice basketmakers — “You’ve got to want to do it” and not mind hard work — is the same advice that she adheres to herself. Even today, she continues to make her baskets from white oak timber, splitting the timber into smaller and smaller pieces, whittling and scraping it to shape the splits, hoops, handles and ribs for her baskets. This a tradition she has maintained for so long that changes in the land use around her home in McMinnville, Tennessee, have caused the white oak trees suitable for her basketmaking to be ever harder to find.

Nowadays, collectors prize Prater’s white oak baskets for their beauty and durability. While her baskets are functional, they are also valued as both artistic expressions of her cultural heritage and her own sense of design. This appreciation is also a marker as to how much the world has changed in the course of this craft artist’s lifetime. Or, as expressed in her plainspoken way, Prater says, “There weren’t no plastic baskets” back when she began practicing her craft.



White Oak Basket, 2004
Photo by Luis Quiles



This is an egg basket. Egg baskets were originally made to keep eggs from rolling together as they were carried to the market.

Do you think that someone who bought this basket today would use it for carrying eggs to market? What would you do with it?

RELATIONSHIP TO PLACE

Contemporary craft artists tend to think broadly about their connection to a sense of “place.” While many of these artists are natives of the Southern region, others were drawn to the region to teach or study and have stayed because of the rich cultural, educational and natural environment. Their connection to place can include their connection to places they come from or visit in their travels.

Alice R. Ballard is an artist who has lived in a number of places around the United States and abroad, and has now returned to her native state of South Carolina. Her various life experiences have made their impression upon her, and she herself will tell you, “...I still am amazed that after all these years I have returned to the state of my birth. It confirms my belief that life is like a spiral and we are constantly returning to people, places and events in our lives but in a different place with an altered perspective.” Ballard’s thoughtful perspective on life is evident in her splendid ceramic forms, many of them inspired by the sprouting plants in her garden, the lush vegetation in her neighborhood, and even from produce she buys at the grocery store. In the ceramic forms Ballard creates, there is an invitation to take time to notice the deep beauty of such prosaic inspiration, to simply hold your breath as you take in natural beauty, like sunlight through foliage.

In describing her artistic process, Ballard takes her inspiration into her studio where she “can spend countless hours contemplating a particular form in order to feel its energy. It becomes a Zen-like connection with nature not unlike meditation. Next I will begin to draw the form, trying to capture the essence of what I have felt and observed. Then I begin to bring the form to life in clay. As an artist, I hope that those who connect with my work can share some of the harmony and tranquility I realize through the creative process.”

Within her expressed love of nature, Alice R. Ballard’s ceramics are also a desire to communicate “the metamorphosis of nature’s forms as they change from season to season” and to use them “as a metaphor for the human capacity for spiritual renewal and rebirth.” In that respect, perhaps, Ballard’s wish is also an insight into the many times when she herself has had to relocate and restart her life in a new place.



Pod Trio, 2005
Photo by Luis Quiles

“In my work I am also endlessly drawn to the universal world in which differing life forms share similar qualities.”

*Alice R. Ballard,
Greenville, SC*



Alice R. Ballard is an accomplished artist, but in a sense she is also a scientist. Where can you see this in her work?

How does her decision to use primarily black and white in this artwork ask us to experience the world differently?

INNOVATION AND EVOLUTION

Traditional artists understand that as craft traditions come to a new generation, they are recast into the present while also referencing the artistry and works of past generations. Their approach is not to simply maintain a craft tradition, but also to allow for the innovation that inevitably occurs as each succeeding generation imparts their own mark upon the work that passes through their hands.



Philip Simmons is a master blacksmith and ornamental ironworker who was born in 1912 and grew up in Charleston, South Carolina, where he lives to this day. Moving to Charleston at age eight, Simmons first had jobs shining shoes and selling newspapers. Fate stepped in with the first encounters Philip Simmons had with the blacksmith shop of established Charleston blacksmith, Peter Simmons (no relation). As Simmons recalls the experience, “It was the action that brought me to the shop. I liked to see the sparks and the fire, and hear the hammer ring.” As an apprentice in the shop, Philip learned to shoe horses and forge fittings for wagons and ships. As he remembers, “Peter Simmons...taught me about metal; everything I knew about metal he taught me. He was a good friend, good teacher, good everything to me.”

By the time he was 26 years old, Philip Simmons was established as a blacksmith in his own right. But coming of age at a time when automobiles were replacing horses as transportation, Simmons could sense that significant cultural changes were underway. As Simmons explains, “You heard about the cars came in and put the horses out of business. I knew how to shoe horses but I knew nothing about repairing cars.” He had to figure out a new way to make a living with what he did know. And what he knew was how to work hot metal; how to hammer it and twist it and shape it.

He began studying the fancy wrought-iron work that people had on gates and balconies. And he began to experiment. While he had learned the primary materials and techniques of working with metals in his apprenticeship, his deeper knowledge and artistry have evolved over the ensuing decades of designing and fabricating wrought-iron gates, fences, balconies, and window grilles that grace public and private buildings in South Carolina, and Charleston in particular. Simmons explains, “I learned the art on my own...just by watching how things were put together.” In using and applying his observation skills in this sense, Simmons sees himself as a self-taught artist.

Over time, Philip Simmons’s artistic accomplishments have garnered both state and national attention and awards. The National Endowment for the Arts awarded Simmons a National Heritage Fellowship in 1982, and he has received the “Order of the Palmetto” from the State of South Carolina. Both honors signify the achievements and artistry of a man whose career began amidst the sounds and the sights of a blacksmith shop.



“I learned how to make the wagon wheel the same way that I learned how to make the art.”

*Philip Simmons,
Charleston, SC*



Room Divider, c. 1970
Photo by Philip Simmons Foundation, Inc.

When Philip Simmons decided he needed to find a new way to make a living, he walked around Charleston and studied all the fancy wrought iron work on balconies and gates.

He decided he could make them for his living. If you were to walk around your neighborhood, what kind of art might you see?

Are there murals or sculptures? Are there buildings with stained glass windows or wrought iron gates? There might even be art in your home — maybe a painting or a quilt. See what you can find... Sometimes we are so used to our surroundings that we don't notice the art around us.



INNOVATION AND EVOLUTION

Contemporary craft artists have innovation at the center of their creative process and they are willing to test boundaries and take risks as part of their desire to leave their creative mark upon the world. These craft artists like challenging the traditions of their form of craft to move in new directions, creating not only new artworks or techniques but new ways of working with others.

“I attempt to push the tapestry genre as I investigate issues of identity, life and the human condition.” *Jon Eric Riis, Atlanta, GA*

Jon Eric Riis creates woven jackets so handsomely presented and so richly embellished that a viewer is drawn into spending more time with his work. These exquisitely formed jackets have a duality about them, for they manage to be both familiar and disconcerting at the same time. Within the complexity the artist presents, one finds a strong resonating truth about the contradictory contemporary world in which we live and it is a strength that gives this Atlanta artist's artwork a high profile within the fiber arts field. Riis's artwork can be found in a number of art museums in the United States, including the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Cleveland Museum of Art and the Renwick Gallery of the Smithsonian American Museum of Art.

Riis's choice of a jacket as a format for artwork is influenced by his experience as a collector and dealer of Asian textiles, particularly his familiarity with Chinese robes. A jacket also has all sorts of associations, among them warmth, protection and comfort. In this woven representation of a jacket, *Freedom's Price*, Riis has the jacket's exterior pattern echoing desert military camouflage, while the interior is suggestively dripping red. Nestled into the red area is the adage “Home Sweet Home” in a Gothic script lettering reminiscent of the Victorian era. It is up to us as viewers to decide what the message is.

Jon Eric Riis's evolution as a fiber artist began in his undergraduate work at the School of the Art Institute in Chicago, where Pre-Columbian Peruvian textiles inspired him. Subsequent influences included Greek mythology, and his experiences branching from his work with Asian textiles. In this deep appreciation of history and other cultures, as well as his view that weaving itself is a connection between past and present, Riis's artistic work is informed by the past — but not dictated by what has come before him. The belief that these historical and cultural influences are all fuel for the artist to draw upon as sources to create a contemporary message is at the heart of Riis's weavings.

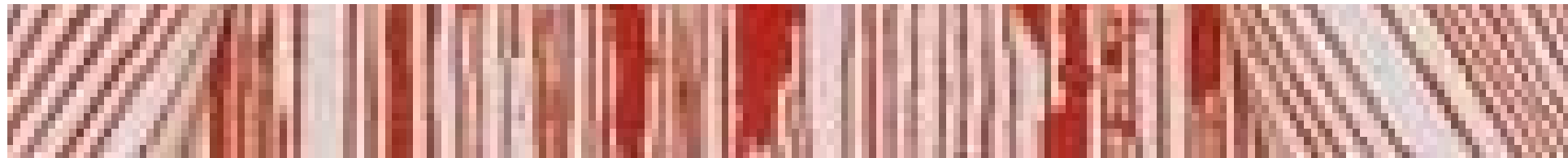
Freedom's Price, 2005
Photo by Bart's Art



Is the artist commenting on the violence that is so common within our American “home” culture?

Or is he commenting on the fate of soldiers who leave behind the comforts of “Home, Sweet Home?”

As with many contemporary artists, Riis is raising more questions than he answers.



CONNECTIONS

Traditional artists understand that passing along what they know to others is central to craftspeople in the South. In the processes they use, in the artworks they produce, and in their personal and professional lives, these artists connect with communities of the Southern region of the United States. Such relationships are often at the center of their work. Through their creative efforts and their commitment to pass on their skills, these artists strengthen the places where they work and live.



The Crossroads Quilters of Claiborne County, Mississippi, are a group of individual artists who, while practicing the craft of quilting individually, also do collaborative quilting on a regular basis. The group operates in relationship with the Mississippi Cultural Crossroads arts agency, a not-for-profit organization with a broad agenda that includes humanistic, educational and economic goals for the county. The quilts that the Crossroads Quilters produce are sold as part of the overall economic development goals for the Crossroads Quilters and the Mississippi Cultural Crossroads group.

The Crossroads Quilters are based in the community of Port Gibson, a gathering place for multi-generational quilters within the county. Here they share ideas about quilting and pass their traditions on to the next generation. This sharing occurs in a number of ways, including competing against each other in quilt shows. This good-natured rivalry actually helps to raise the bar artistically for each of the quilters as it occurs within Mississippi Cultural Crossroads' established goal of helping citizens reach their full potential, be it artistically or otherwise. In the case of these competitive quilt contests, the belief that a "rising tide lifts all boats" is what applies most!

Sharing also occurs within the Crossroad Quilters collaborative work and an evolution of traditional quilting techniques occurs quite naturally. Whereas several quilters might design and sew individual pieces, others may do piecing and sew fabric blocks together, the pieces quilted by many members, and finished off by still others. Along the way, information, advice and techniques flow back and forth freely.

Geraldine Nash and **Gustina Atlas**, the two Crossroad Quilters within this exhibit, are active in passing along their knowledge and experiences of quilting. Both women studied with master quilter Hystercine Rankin, and both share an enthusiasm about quilting that embraces innovative approaches to established styles and motifs.



Picking Cotton, Geraldine Nash, 2007
Photo by Luis Quijles

“A little bit
of your lifestyle,
a little bit of
your family,
that’s what
influences you.”

*Gustina Atlas,
one of the
Crossroads Quilters,
Port Gibson, MS*

Do you have a special
quilt or blanket that
someone made for you?

What makes a
handmade quilt or
blanket different from a
mass-produced blanket?



CONNECTIONS

Integral to the idea of “passing on” for **contemporary craftspeople** of the region is the concept of chosen communities — local to international networks that may be personal or professional, formal or informal. These connections often occur among workshop classes or university programs, and Southern centers of activity such as the Universities of Alabama, Georgia and Florida, Tulane University, Penland School of Crafts, and others. In these venues, dialogue and professional interaction among like-minded colleagues help generate the creative stimulation and support that are central both to their creative life and to the idea of connections between craftspeople.

Steve Miller makes books by hand. On first examination, the books look as though they were made many years ago. Anyone who is familiar with this artist, however, knows that Miller is very much about the present and the future in his work as both an educator at the University of Alabama at Tuscaloosa and as a bookmaker. A Wisconsin transplant to the Southern region, he is very much rooted to his present home. He draws inspiration from spending time relaxing and thinking in the pecan orchard in his backyard.

If Steve Miller doesn't sound like what you might expect of a bookmaker, it is because in many respects he doesn't fit into conventional expectations of someone who might be bookish or stuffy. Perhaps that is because Miller came to bookmaking in an unexpected and dramatic way. When, as a non-art major undergraduate student, he sought to make a book from a manuscript of his own poems, he had a “Eureka” moment, when his words, poetry, craftsmanship, process and art all came together in a way that he had not foreseen. His initial excitement led him to develop a much deeper valuing of books and reading, and to understand that the interaction between words and bookmaking is critically important.

Learning and mastering the art of traditional bookmaking has only fueled Steve Miller's passion for teaching. While using the traditional tools and processes of bookmaking might be a hindrance for some, Steve Miller embraces those limitations and then tries to push them as far as possible. He is also not limited by any notions of what traditional bookmaking must or must not do. He is completely comfortable using contemporary technology alongside the traditional methods.

Steve Miller perceives the creation of a book as a collaborative effort of author, illustrator, printer and binder. This collaboration captures his artistic imagination and his enthusiasm is shared with his university students and others. He and his students go into local schools and festivals to demonstrate printing processes on actual presses so that young people can experience the artform firsthand. To Miller, it's important for the next generation to learn about the craft of bookmaking, to discover for themselves the excitement he has experienced, and find out why handmade books still have a role in today's world of electronic communications.

“Mastery means a nearly unlimited willingness to stay with a problem until it is solved.”

*Steve Miller,
Tuscaloosa, AL*

By His Own Labor, 2000, *Illegal Use of the Soul*, 2006, *Skin*, 2005
Photo by Luis Quijias



If you were to create a book, what would it be about?
How would you want it to look and feel?



Credits:

Exhibit Curators:	Jean McLaughlin, Penland School of Crafts Kathleen Mundell, Cultural Resources, Inc.
Exhibit Education Curators:	Martin Rollins, Isaac Shelby Elementary School Judy Sizemore, Kentucky Arts Council
Exhibit Design and Fabrication:	Nancy Sherrill Art & Design
Exhibit Staff:	Teresa Hollingsworth, Exhibit Director Jenna Knight, Exhibit Assistant Mollie Lakin-Hayes, Project Manager William MacLeod, IT Director/Webmaster Ann-Laura Parks, CFRE, Communications and Development
Audio Guide Production:	Q Media Productions, Inc.

Many other artists, photographers, scholars, arts administrators and partners contributed to *Tradition/Innovation*, and we thank them at www.traditioninnovation.org/acknowledgements



Tradition/Innovation: American Masterpieces of Southern Craft and Traditional Art

is a project of the Southern Arts Federation, www.southarts.org, and is made possible through generous support from the National Endowment for the Arts, and the state arts agencies of the Federation's partner states – Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina and Tennessee.

This document is available in alternate formats — contact SAF at (404) 874-7244.

