



KENTUCKY CRAFT HISTORY: Gather, Conserve, Present

November 13, 2009
ArtsPlace
Lexington, Kentucky

Presented by:

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association
P.O. Box 22363
Lexington, KY 40522

Supported by:



The Kentucky Arts Council, the state arts agency, supports KCHEA with state tax dollars and federal funding from the National Endowment for the Arts.

Kentucky Craft History and Education Association

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FINAL REPORT

PURPOSE: The Kentucky Craft History and Education Association Forum brought together arts and history groups and interested individuals to discuss ways to collect, conserve, and present Kentucky craft history and explore ways that we might share knowledge and cooperate. One of the Goals of KCHEA is to work closely with other arts and history organizations in the state.

PARTICIPATION: Fifty-four participants attended the KCHEA Forum. They represented twenty-five art, craft, and history related organizations and included individual artists, collectors, and supporters. Additionally more than twenty-five individuals expressed interest in attending the Forum and this report will be made available to them as well. There were six volunteers and several of them were able to participate in a portion of the Forum. A facilitator (Judy Sizemore), an evaluator (Elizabeth Adler, and three session leaders (Joanna Hays, Pat Bradley, and Kathy Werking) enabled the KCHEA Board to fully participate in the Forum. Three University of Kentucky geography graduate students recorded in the break out sessions. KCHEA board members in attendance were Fran Redmon, Susan Goldstein, Richard Bellando, Lila Bellando, Mary Reed, and Philis Alvic. Tim Glotzbach did not attend because of a prior work commitment.

AGENDA:

Remarks: The program began with remarks from KCHEA President, Fran Redmon and introduction of the KCHEA Board. Then Founding President, Susan Goldstein, thanked LexArts and The Kentucky Arts Council for support of the Forum. Dr. and Mrs. Chuck Rolph contributed generously, as well as Pepsi Cola Bottling Company, Magee's Bakery, Portofino's, Third Street Stuff and Saloman and Company?

PowerPoint Presentation: Philis Alvic presented the history and goals of the Kentucky Craft History and Education Association (KCHEA).

Introductions: Facilitator Judy Sizemore guided participants in introducing themselves and their organizations.

Discussion Sessions: After lunch the group broke into three discussion groups: Paper, Objects, or People. They were charged with answering questions about what has already been collected regarding Kentucky craft history and how to go about collecting in the future.

PAPER: Moderator - Joanna Hays

What should be collected?

In collecting documents, it is important to collect comprehensively to show the whole picture. Things that should be collected are published articles and books, films, photos, magazines, awards, recognition, artist statements, bios, advertising, promotion materials from exhibits, invitations and announcements, press releases, and financial statements.

Besides items on paper, things should also be collected in digital formats. In acquiring information in different digital formats, it is important to have a means to read a particular format. Alternatively, it is important to upgrade digital information to current technology. Also, best practices in preservation should be frequently monitored.

What has already been collected?

Papers are collected by state-supported universities and the many private colleges and universities. Also, archives are maintained by the Kentucky Historical Society, the Filson Club, and several regional historical societies. Many organizations, state agencies, and businesses have materials relating to their operations and history such as KET, Kentucky Crafted, Kentucky Arts Council, Kentucky Guild of Artists and Craftsmen, the Artisan Centers in Hindman and Berea, and the Kentucky School of Craft.

What needs to be collected?

Papers should be collected from:

1. those people who received recognition for their craft work
2. from those who were instrumental in organizing and providing services to craftspeople
people who have made their living with crafts
3. organizations that have served artists and crafts
4. retail craft businesses
5. researchers of arts and crafts including copies of the works

Methods and Approaches

Methods should be established for prioritizing collecting. Professional archivist should be consulted about the process of for collecting and prioritizing. A schedule of records retention should be established that not only collects papers in a timely manner, but takes into account diversity, current and desired documentation goals, and geographic distribution. A timeline of Kentucky craft history should be compiled to better understand progression of events and where information is lacking.

Training strategies for preserving craft history

1. KCHEA Board, so they can both understand and impart information to others
2. Training for the public – how the public can preserve papers
3. Awareness campaign to teach the public about why and what to save. Possibly a ‘bring your paper’ road show that could scan documents.
4. KCHEA could serve as a liaison to help people value what they have so they will place it in archives.

OBJECTS: Moderator - Pat Bradley

What has been collected?

A Survey needs to be made of what is currently in collections around the state. It is not known what information is kept about the objects in collections. How are items categorized and recorded within collections? Many objects have been displayed at different venues, but who is the actual owner of the items? Also, how would it be possible to identify objects in private collections?

A list was made of different kinds of crafts that have been collected and also that might be collected: quilts, folk art, furniture, glass, baskets, 2-D portraits and paintings (Is painting fine/folk), toys, musical instruments, ironwork/ metalworks, canes, fiber arts, weaving, bowls, photography, gourds,

clothing, jewelry, sculpture, buildings, things documented by WPA (Works Projects Administration -- Index of American Design), architectural projects, looms, spinning wheels, music, books/authors/poets.

A quilt survey was made in each county, but that has not been updated. KET visual arts toolkit has a virtual museum with repositories throughout Kentucky. Kentucky Historical Society has a grant to survey collections. (IMLS grant)

Methods/ Places of collections: Colleges and universities – all schools, craft centers, institutions, private collections, personal, informal collections, corporate collections, quilt trails and books, video documents, corporate collections, publicly installed art, craft shops – examples- Ritchie dolls, libraries, hospitals, art councils, county historical societies- a grassroots resource with great potential, airport collections, hotels (Beaumont Tavern in Harrodsburg), museums/ quilt museums, broommaking.

How should we collect?

It is difficult to determine what needs to be collected when it is not known what is already in repositories around the state. Some urgency should be considered in collecting because of craftspeople aging and objects not being available after someone is gone.

Questions concerning collecting:

1. How can we educate people to care about crafts in their own homes?
2. Can institutional collecting be a resource for strengthening the craft industry?
3. Should institutions collect young people's work to endorse their work?
4. How should we address the role of the artist? Should an artist have input into their own legacy?
5. How many pieces are we trying to gather? Should there be limits set on the types of things that need to be collected?
6. How should quality be taken into account in collecting?
7. Should KCHEA focus on strengthening public rather than private collections?
8. Should information about craft processes be collected along with objects?

What needs to be collected?

Suggested using a very expansive definition of “crafts” was suggested for collecting purposes which might include: basket making, shingle making, stone masonry, blacksmith art, occupational culture- (the Folklife program documents these living traditions. Shakertown does reproductions), riflemakers (flint-locked, percussion), knifemakers, slave walls.

Exhibits are a good way to learn about types of works displayed and artists. Shows can discover new or little known artists. Exhibition catalogues provide good source material. Exhibition catalogs, digital media, and auction catalogs should be collected.

Digital Archive

KCHEA should establish a digital archive that lists crafts in different collections—both public and private. This archive could also include exhibition catalogues. The archive should be searchable and include information about the techniques, materials, and background of the artist.

PEOPLE: Moderator – Kathy Werking

What has been collected?

KCHEA has done 42 interviews and videos of artists and craft promoters and they are being transcribed. Other interview collections are housed at the Folklife program, oral history center at UK, KET, East Kentucky Arts Project, NKU, Appalshop, African American/Native American Heritage Commission, Berea College Appalachian Center, and the settlement schools.

The Kentucky Oral History Commission has a directory of Oral History Collections in the state. Definitions of “crafts” were discussed. Different criteria for selecting artists to be interviewed were talked about and some suggestions were made for possible inclusions in the criteria.

What needs to be collected?

The discussion of this question centered on how an interview should be constructed and what it should contain. The interviewer should be prepared with background information on the person’s life and art and art-involvement. A list of questions should be developed so that standard information is known about each person. Then the list should include optional questions that deal specifically with the status of the person as craftsman, educator, craft organizer, or collector. It is important to get a comprehensive view of craft history and not just concentrate on one set of players in the crafts world.

Interviewers should be trained. Maybe the Community Scholars approach would be applicable to craft related interviews.

What should the end products be? A series of programs could be created for television using the oral histories and focusing on different topics.

KCHEA should develop a website where that includes information about oral histories already have conducted by them and about other crafts related oral histories located around the state.

Reconvening into full session.

Summaries of the Break-Out Sessions by their Moderators.

The participants then worked on three lists of ideas to present Kentucky Crafts to the citizens of this state.

Presentation Ideas: After suggesting items in the below categories, we were asked to place dots to indicate preferences. Green means they would be willing to help with the issue. Yellow means they would be willing to take a leadership role. If a group had already begun a venture, they were asked to identify themselves.

- ***How can we present Kentucky craft history to the citizens of our state?***
 - ***Products:***
 - *Database, clearing house*
 - *Online resource center* 4 Green 2 Yellow
 - *Virtual museum of Kentucky Crafts* 3 Green 1 Yellow (KAHT, Alan Weiss)
 - *Digitalize all catalogues and books* 5 Green 2 Yellow
 - *Curriculum materials for teachers* 1 Green
 - *Video – 20 minute – about crafts* 1 Green 1 Yellow (KAHT)
 - *Radio programs* 3 Green 1 Yellow

- *Television series* 2 Green 2 Yellow
- *Directory of crafts persons*
- *Kentucky craft history encyclopedia* 5 Green 1 Yellow
- *Library of Endangered Techniques Video* 1 Green 2 Yellow
- *Speaker's Bureau* 3 Green 1 Yellow
- *Craft Mobile* 4 Green
- *Craft Mobile (National)* 4 Green 2 Yellow
- **Events:**
 - *Exhibits* 6 Green 2 Yellow
 - *Partnering with Extension Offices*
 - *Exhibits traveling nationally and internationally*
 - *Outreach – rural areas that lack of art galleries* 3 Green 2 Yellow
 - *Outreach programs on college campuses for international students over holiday/summer breaks*
 - *Speaker's bureau* 6 Green 2 Yellow
 - *Crafters conference – professional development workshops on different topics, networking, how to think about conserving and creating your legacy, collecting the work of others* 4 Green 2 Yellow
 - *Craft circle – bring out crafts that have been created within families* 3 Green
 - *Scanning photograph parties – scan images of particular crafts that have been made* 3 Green 1 Yellow
 - *DIY day* 1 Green
 - *Public Demonstrations with*
 - *Random events for visitors* 6 Green 2 Yellow
 - *Professional development curriculum* 4 Green 2 Yellow
- **Activities:**
 - *Training on the Interview Process* 2 Green 2 Yellow (Ky Folklife Program)
 - *Kentucky Crafts Campaign* 3 Green 2 Yellow (KAHT)
 - *Education Program for K--12* 5 Green
 - *Apprenticeship program* 2 Green 1 Yellow
 - *Educating artists and the public to value and conserve* 2 Green 2 Yellow (Deidre Skaggs)
 - *Web literacy -- pairing younger and older generations* 5 Green 1 Yellow (Gloria Stepp, Daniel Graham, Georgetown College)
 - *Chautauqua performances featuring older crafters* 3 Yellow
 - *Fundraising* 1 Green 2 Yellow

Evaluation – Betsy Adler, Folklorist

Dr. Adler was hired to attend the Forum and report on what she observed and make suggestions for future actions. Her report summarized the activities of the day and then pointed out what she felt were weak points and what were the strengths of the gathering. She observed that, the “Participants were excited to be there, full of ideas and ready to work.... Ideas generated by the group were wide-ranging and imaginative. There’s a lot of energy waiting to be harnessed.”

The organization and logistics of the events were praised, but a few glitches in the day’s activities were noted. She encouraged us to seek input from individuals and organizations in the western part

of the state. It was suggested that we should broaden the group of experts that we consult, particularly in history.

She strongly recommended that KCHEA establish an active Internet presence and keep it interactive and updated.

Adler concluded her evaluation with: “Keep your eye on the big picture. Maintain your focus on Kentucky Craft HISTORY and not on the object and not on reviving crafts. Don’t get bogged down on crafts vs. craft history vs. history of crafts in Kentucky or on whether crafts are art, artisan, or pre-industrial. Above all, remember that “KCHEA does not plan to become a bricks and mortar institution, but rather to be a resource for information about craft history and a partner with other groups in presenting crafts and craft history to people around Kentucky.” Therein lays your strength.”