

# TACA is now TENNESSEE CRAFT



## Craft Demonstration Professional Practices

**Tennessee Craft Week** is a collection of craft events and happenings designed to connect and celebrate craft artists, their work and the businesses that support the local craft economy. Tennessee Craft will again partner with the **Tennessee Department of Tourist Development** for all fourteen Tennessee Welcome Centers to host day-long craft demonstrations with talented craft artists sharing their creative process and skills with visitors statewide.

In preparation for Tennessee Craft Week, we asked a handful of professional craft demonstrators to give us their best advice for producing successful demonstrations. Special thanks to artists **Courtney Adair Johnson, Chery Cratty, Teresa Hays, Tim Hintz, Ansley Larsson, Susan Parry, John Quick, Tracey Rogers, Alf Sharp and Emily Tuttle** for their valuable contributions.

### PREPARATION:

Artists overwhelming agreed that preparation is key to a great experience for the audience. Here are a few tips to keep in mind, should you be a craft artist preparing to demonstrate.

- 1 Find out about the facility where you will be demonstrating in advance. Will it be indoors or outdoors? How far will you need to cart your equipment? What kind of ventilation does it have? Ask about noise and make sure your own equipment isn't so noisy that the audience can't hear you explain your process. Be prepared to be flexible.
- 2 Safety must come first. Never assume that others know the safety concerns of your craft. The artist should be aware of both public and personal safety. Make sure the audience can still be close enough to see all the nuances of what you are doing. Be sure to have insurance and list demonstrating as one of the things you do as an artist.
- 3 Keep your gear and setup simple. Bring extra props for showing different stages of the process. It will help when people ask questions. Make a packing list of what you need to bring and prepare for each step of the process. Store the list on your computer so you can go back to revise and print when you need it.
- 4 Find out who the audience will be. Preparing a demonstration for adults is different than a demonstration for a mixed audience of adults and children.
- 5 Demonstrations can take a lot out of you, so be prepared with the things you need to stay fresh and hydrated.

## PRESENTATION & AUDIENCE ENGAGEMENT:

Use your time wisely for maximum impact and be sure to practice. Remember to:

- ① Plan for lots of action and keep it simple. Anything detailed that requires lots of concentration may not work well while you are presenting. Show part of the creative process that the public may not be familiar with. You don't have to show all your tricks or include hands-on activities.
- ② Keep your demonstration presentation to twenty minutes or less, with time for audience engagement. Make sure the audience can see something from start to finish within that time frame. Give a clear verbal and visual explanation of the process while you are doing it. Don't forget to explain the basics. Think of your demonstration as a brief one-act play with a beginning and an end.
- ③ Invite the audience to ask questions and ask them questions. Avoid turning your back to the crowd.
- ④ If someone new joins the crowd, welcome them and explain what is going on. It helps if you are extroverted, but a well-made storyboard with pictures and steps can go a long way too. Have a handout that explains your process so people can follow along. A list of vocabulary words is helpful for all ages. Don't forget your promotional materials!
- ⑤ Demonstrating takes a lot of patience and stamina. You will say the same thing and answer the same questions many times. Try not to let one person monopolize your attention. Stay friendly and open to interaction with the audience. Keep it fun! Enthusiasm is contagious to your audience.



### Demonstration Highlights Shared by Artists

“A woman who was blind, accompanied by her friends, stopped at my booth. Her friends told her about what I was demonstrating, carving a chair part, and she was able to feel the completed chair leg and compare it to the one I was presently carving. I carefully let her examine, by touch, the tools I was using in the process. She was the most attentive and appreciative visitor I ever encountered, before or since.” — *John Quick, Windsor chair maker*

“Demonstrating helps build a fan base that leads to sales.”  
 — *Courtney Adair Johnson, reuse artist*

“One woman was so engaged in the raku process that she wanted to purchase the piece immediately after it came out of the kiln, even though it was too hot to touch!” — *Tracey Rogers, Raku potter*

“A lady saw me demonstrating at the Tennessee Craft fair and asked me if I would be interested in doing an HGTV segment.”  
 — *Emily Tuttle, printmaker*

“A little girl who was a bead recipient from Beads of Courage, an international art therapy program for children with serious illnesses that I'm involved with locally, came by my booth. I had the privilege of making her a bead of her choice as she eagerly watched me create it, knowing it was just for her. It was so rewarding to see the look of joy on her face.”  
 — *Susan Parry, Lampwork jeweler*



“Nothing is more fulfilling than having a school teacher report to me after a demonstration at their school that I inspired children to go home and give marbling a go.” — *Teresa Hays, fiber marble*

“I had someone watch for a while, and then commission \$65,000 worth of furniture from me!” — *Alf Sharp, furniture maker*