Tennessee Craft
Request for Proposal (RFP)

Project: History of Black Craft Art in Tennessee since 1920
Services: Research – Catalog and Historical Context
Closing Date: July 15, 2022, at 11:59pm Central Time
Primary Contact: Bonnie Matthews
(615) 736-7600
bmatthews@tennesseecraft.org

A. General
1. Purpose
Tennessee Craft (Tennessee Association of Craft Artists) seeks proposals from a qualified contractor to provide professional research and writing services to initiate an ongoing exploration of history of Black craftspeople and Black craft-making in Tennessee since 1920. The primary goal of this project is to research the continuance and transfer of craft traditions among African Americans over the course of Tennessee’s history to inform future public programming. The study shall: 1) create a catalog of Black craft in Tennessee through the past century; 2) provide historical context for the work of modern Black craft artists; and 3) suggest topics for public presentation and further inquiry. This RFP describes the basic services required and the process for selecting the qualified investigator for this project.

2. Submission of Proposal
Prospective contractors shall submit one (1) electronic copy (sent via email) of their proposal no later than 11:59pm Central Time on Friday, July 15, 2022 to bmatthews@tennesseecraft.org. All proposals must be clearly marked "History of Black Craft Art in Tennessee since 1920" in the subject heading. All submissions must be received by the RFP closing date. Incomplete submissions and submissions received after the closing date will not be accepted.

B. Background Information
Originally founded in 1965 as the Tennessee Artist-Craftsmen’s Association, TACA was incorporated as a not-for-profit in 1972, changing its name to Tennessee Association of Craft Artists in 1989, and adopted the Tennessee Craft DBA in 2014. Tennessee Craft’s membership is divided into regional chapters, including East, Midstate, Northeast, Plateau, South and Southwest. The Midwest and Southeast Chapters are currently inactive. Membership activities have traditionally included local and statewide workshops, exhibitions, demonstrations, annual directories, newsletters and member meetings. Funding for Tennessee Craft is generated primarily through activity-related revenues, grants, contributions and member dues.

The first Tennessee Crafts Fair opened in Centennial Park in May 1972 as a way to showcase quality Tennessee crafts. The juried show was restricted to Tennessee residents, but open to members and non members alike. In 1987, TACA produced its first Tennessee Fall Craft Fair in
Nashville, which allowed non-Tennessee residents to participate in the nationally juried show. Both spring and fall fairs are still organized annually, as the Spring Tennessee Craft Fair and Fall Tennessee Craft Fair respectively. A Biennial Exhibition was established in 1966 and has been held every even year since then with the exceptions of 1988, 2006, 2014 and 2020. Programming has embraced technological developments for marketing and sales, while continuing to promote handmade traditions of craft-making.

The development of Tennessee Craft was part of the larger Arts & Craft Movement. In the early 20th century, craft schools and craft guilds began to form in the Southern Appalachian region. To give Tennessee artists a connecting point and ensure our state’s traditions were preserved, a group of passionate individuals worked to unite artists from Memphis to Johnson City. A dedicated core drove across the state, recruiting members to organize events for artists to show and sell their work. This effort resulted in the formation of the Tennessee Association of Craft Artists (TACA), founded in 1965.

Participation by Tennesseans of all backgrounds in Tennessee Craft’s programs over the past 100 years has been uneven. This research project seeks to address the underrepresentation and/or omission of Black artists in our history and programs, in particular the historical narrative of craft’s reemergence in the craft school and Studio Craft movements from the 1920s forward.

This project is the first step in a series of actions by Tennessee Craft and our partners to re-center the efforts of Black Tennesseans in the production of handmade craft throughout the state’s history. Contextualizing the work of Black craft artists today and increasing public awareness of craft produced in the past is our focus.

This project will provide the following benefits:

1. Tell the stories of Black craft artists publicly to address underrepresentation and omission.
2. Build/increase resource(s) of information on Black craft artists for current and future work.
3. Provide content for public programs to share this work more broadly, elevating Black craft artists.
4. Supplement the organizational history of Tennessee Craft to include diverse craft artists and craft art.

C. Scope of Services
Tennessee Craft seeks a qualified contractor with professional research and writing skills to develop an introductory catalog and contextualization of Black craft artists in Tennessee since 1920. The contractor will work closely with the Tennessee Craft staff, committee members and project advisor.

1. The contractor is expected to:
   a. Provide a survey of Black craft artists/makers in Tennessee within the span of 1920-2020, including placing the artists in a longer historical context.
b. Document Black craft artists and their work in an image rich digital resource including but not limited to photographs, biographies, maps, and representation of art and artifacts.

c. Design a system to organize and index artists by name, region, medium, chronology and/or other reasonable structure.

d. Research and document makers from throughout the three Grand Divisions of the state (East, Middle, West), including both rural and urban makers.

e. Explore and represent a diverse and broad array of craft media, including but not limited to basketry, books/paper, clay, dolls, fiber/textiles, furniture, glass, instruments, jewelry, leather, metal, mixed media, painting, photography, printmaking, sculpture and wood. Two-dimensional media (painting, photography) shall comprise no more than 20% of the artwork presented.

f. Explore, contextualize, and document work of known authorship and anonymity.

2. The final project submission shall include deliverables:

a. A description of objectives and methodology.

b. A compendium of not less than thirty (30) Black craft artists or collectives, with diverse representation by region, rural/urban context, medium, and background.

c. A 7,500 word narrative providing context for Black craft making in broader history that aligns with other contemporary research like Black Craftsperson Digital Archive. Narrative will incorporate historical context for the work of modern Black craft artists from the time of non-Native settlement.

d. Recommendations for public programming, including potential publications, lectures and exhibitions.

e. Recommendations for future research projects in this field.

f. Bibliography, including prior work published in this field, and list of resources utilized.

3. The contractor shall also be responsible for:

a. Initial introductory meeting with the Community Engagement committee, open to all Governing Board and staff members of Tennessee Craft.

b. Three check-in meetings with project advisor (in fall 2022 and spring 2023).

c. One final presentation to the Community Engagement committee, open to all Governing Board and staff members of Tennessee Craft.

d. Short written status updates submitted monthly to the project advisor.

e. A final catalog and narrative report in digital format agreed upon with the project advisor.

All meetings may be conducted virtually or in-person as determined by the Community Engagement Committee and the project advisor, in consultation with the contractor.

Individuals hired for this work are considered contract employees and not regular employees of Tennessee Craft. No sick leave, vacation, or medical benefits are provided for this work. Contracted individuals will be responsible for their own state and federal income taxes.
In addition, the selected contractor shall possess the following qualifications:
1. Experience contextualizing modern events/culture in broader/longer history.
2. Experience using a wide variety of communications and research tools to uncover less-documented actors and stories.
3. Ability to work independently and collaborate with a diverse team.
4. Be at minimum 18 years of age and eligible to work in the United States.
5. Tennessee residency preferred but not required; preference will be given to regional applicants.
6. Ability to organize project records and meet deadlines as necessary.
7. Strong commitment to quality control, attention to detail, communication, and collaboration.
8. Ability to use or oversee use of appropriate technology.

D. Project Timeline

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Activity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 15, 2022</td>
<td>RFP Issued</td>
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<tr>
<td>July 15, 2022 at 11:59pm CDT</td>
<td>Proposals due</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 1, 2022</td>
<td>Estimated contract award</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 27, 2022</td>
<td>Introduction to Tennessee Craft team</td>
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<td>September 30, 2022</td>
<td>Initial payment and project commences</td>
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<td>November 1, 2022</td>
<td>Touchpoint with project advisor</td>
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<td>March 1, 2023</td>
<td>Touchpoint with project advisor</td>
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<td>May 15, 2023</td>
<td>Touchpoint with project advisor</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 31, 2023</td>
<td>Final payment at completion/delivery of the project</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 26, 2023</td>
<td>Meeting/Presentation to Tennessee Craft team</td>
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E. Proposals

Proposals from qualified applicants shall include, at a minimum, the following information:
1. Statement of Solution:
   Describe how you propose to address the challenges of completing this project, including your interest in pursuing this research. If applicable, include how this project may help fulfill any additional parameters, degree requirements, or goals.

2. Project understanding, approach, and methods:
   a. Describe understanding of the project and identify a methodology to fulfill the scope of services and deliverable requirements.
   b. Summarize the key elements of the proposal and outline reasons why you should be selected.

3. Similar Project Experience
   Identify similar project experiences within the last 3-5 years and provide documentation and reference with contact details for each. Submitted projects shall represent work of the candidate.
By submitting a response to this RFP, the respondent hereby authorizes Tennessee Craft to contact references and make such further investigations as may be in the best interest of the organization.

4. Applicant Intent and Qualifications:
   a. Submit a statement of interest (500-1,000 words).
   b. Submit a resume, including work performed on similar projects, educational and professional background, and/or other qualifications.
   c. Provide a writing sample demonstrating historical writing.

5. Schedule and Work Plan:
   Identify the key work tasks, milestones, and critical paths based upon Tennessee Craft’s proposed project completion date of August 31, 2023.

F. Proposal Evaluation and Selection Process
1. Shortly after the submission deadline, an independent selection panel will review all proposals. At its discretion, Tennessee Craft may elect to conduct interviews with prospective investigators as part of the selection process.

2. Tennessee Craft will evaluate proposals based on the following criteria:
   a. Statement of Solution;
   b. Project understanding, approach, and methods;
   c. Previous successful experiences with projects with similar outcomes/work products to those of this project;
   d. Applicant qualifications, technical expertise, knowledge, and experience;
   e. Schedule and Work Plan;
   f. Any other factor(s) that might aid in selecting the best candidate.

3. Upon approval by Tennessee Craft, the successful candidate will be notified and a contractor agreement will be finalized. Unsuccessful candidates will be notified after the contractor agreement has been executed. Work on this project is projected to commence no later than September 30, 2022.

4. Tennessee Craft reserves the right to cancel the RFP at any time, or for any reason that is in the best interests of the organization. Tennessee Craft also reserves the right to reject proposals based on the evaluation of submitted materials. The selection of the successful candidate is based solely on the candidate that will best accomplish the objectives of the project.

G. Delivery Schedule
   Production schedule will be determined at the project startup, on a schedule mutually agreed to by the successful applicant and Tennessee Craft. The anticipated project completion date is August 31, 2023. Please note that funding may be provided by the TN Nonprofit Arts & Culture Recovery Fund which may restrict Tennessee Craft’s ability to approve an extension on the project end date.
H. Budget
Stipend for the contractor to complete the project is $5,000 and will be paid in two payments. Stipend includes all supply, travel and miscellaneous costs, and reimbursement of expenses beyond this stipend is neither promised nor guaranteed.

I. Rights and Responsibilities
1. Any and all rights to work produced through this project will be vested in the Tennessee Association of Craft Artists, including any copyrights. Tennessee Craft reserves the right to present language and content that reflect the values and mission of Tennessee Craft.
2. Research will be used by Tennessee Craft and its partners to prepare and present public programming.
3. Finished project may be published by or with permission of Tennessee Craft in electronic or other printed form with credit to Tennessee Craft, researcher, funders and partners.
4. Contractor may not submit work for publication or presentation without prior written approval from Tennessee Craft. All future publications and presentations shall include credit to Tennessee Craft.

Project deliverables will be stored on Tennessee Craft’s server and made available to the public.

J. Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
Tennessee Craft is dedicated to diversity, inclusion and advocating for social justice within the craft community. We are committed to advancing equity for all craft artists. Tennessee Craft is committed to providing an environment that is free from discrimination in employment and opportunity because of race, color, religion, creed, national origin, ancestry, disability, gender, sexual orientation or age.

Tennessee Craft collects demographic information on Governing Board members, employees, volunteers, members and our service populations to ensure inclusivity. This information is kept confidential. Tennessee Craft welcomes applicants to voluntarily include their demographic information in their statement of intent.

K. Contact
Questions regarding this RFP or the associated project should be directed to:
Bonnie Matthews
Tennessee Craft
(615) 736-7600
bmatthews@tennesseecraft.org

This project is being supported, in whole or in part, by federal award number SLFRP5534 awarded to the State of Tennessee by the U.S. Department of the Treasury.