

Behind the Scenes

with Kurt Hertzog



Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts

With a history and tradition that spans a hundred years, Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, has been respectfully dubbed a “cultural attraction.” It is only footsteps removed from the hustle and bustle of an area now filled with music and water-sport theme parks. From the initial fifty students in 1945, Arrowmont now draws artisans and students from not only every state and province, but from twenty-nine different countries.

Arrowmont began life as the Pi Beta Phi Settlement School. Not only did the school provide education where no formal schooling existed, but it also became the area’s first medical clinic. In 1945, the faculty of the University of Tennessee provided guidance for the first summer craft workshop. These workshop programs are in addition to the national and international conferences and symposiums held yearly at the campus. There are also extensive programs for the local community with ArtReach and other children’s programs that impact thousands of local school children.

Along with having a superb woodturning program, Arrowmont offers classes in almost every craft, from jewelry through photography and fiber arts to ceramics and drawing. Amid the many national historic registry buildings is a modern wood studio with exquisitely complete wood-working and woodturning workshops—one with full-size lathes and one with mini-lathes. The woodturning classes begin in March and continue through November, and with course selection ranging from penmaking to hollowforms, there is little in the way of woodturning that is not available to the woodturning enthusiast.

The typical weeklong sessions begin on the Sunday afternoon of class week. The students gather in the dining facility to enjoy dinner, to meet each other, the instructor, and staff, and to review the plans for the week. After dinner and campus orientation, there are auditorium presentations by each of the instructors who have programs that week and this is open to everyone. The presentations provide a community-building environment, since visitation between the various classes is encouraged.

Those who choose to room on campus are treated to modern dormitory facilities and the renowned dining facility. The dining facility provides homestyle dining for all meals and accommodations for virtually any palette. On-site preparation of meals includes the staples, local favorites, and superb, freshly baked breads and desserts. The studio

classrooms are open 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 a.m. with formal instruction typically from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. with a lunch break. After-dinner programs include visits to all the classes being held on campus and gallery showings. Also available are community lounges for students and instructors to gather informally for cards, music, chats, and relaxation. Once on-site, there is little reason to leave campus. The library is extensive and has computer access. It is available to both students and instructors, as well as the local community. Campus-wide Wi-Fi access allows for the most modern of communications for class and personal use. The artists’ outfitter store and bookstore have everything from woodturning tools to supplies for classes. Stocked according to past experience and instructor-provided information, everything needed for any current class is readily available at reasonable prices. The gallery (which is also open to the public) is located in the main building and runs the length of the building with arts and crafts on display, as well as for sale.

Sports and outdoor enthusiasts can be in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park in moments. The park provides excellent recreational opportunities and a great classroom environment for the art and photography classes. Early morning jaunts are common among the running crowds and many friendships between students are built from their common exercise routines. The days are filled with great instruction and classroom time, yet getting away into the park is a relaxing and inspiring experience. Regardless of the season, the beauty of the park is remarkable and picture taking is a popular pastime.

Having experienced Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts many times as both a student and an instructor, I can recommend it without reservation. The experience, camaraderie, instruction, dining, and studio facilities are superb. Attendees should be sure to consider bringing their significant other and making a “vacation” out of their visit. They are sure to find a course of interest to take. If they would rather enjoy the parks, the local area attractions and the Great Smoky Mountains National Park should keep them enjoyably occupied while their turner participates in his or her program.

Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts is located at 556 Parkway in Gatlinburg, Tennessee. For more information about Arrowmont or the current program offerings, visit www.arrowmont.org, call 865-436-5860, or e-mail info@arrowmont.org.



Fig. 1. On a busy street in downtown Gatlinburg, a side street and small sign are the only indications that Arrowmont School of Arts and Crafts is nearby.



Fig. 4. The library has an extensive collection of arts and crafts publications and computer facilities available to the students and public.



Fig. 2. The instructors' dorm and the dining facility are in a building that is on the national historic register.



Fig. 5. The gallery is housed in the main corridor between studios and runs the length of the main building.



Fig. 3. The main building houses the administration, library, auditorium, gallery, artists' outfitter store, bookstore, and many of the studios.



Fig. 6. The artists' outfitter store stocks virtually everything needed for any of the classes being held at the school.



Fig. 7. The bookstore has an extensive selection of books pertinent to all the arts and crafts offered at Arrowmont.



Fig. 10. The large lathe studio is also well equipped with lathes large enough to do much bigger work.



Fig. 8. Part of the Arrowmont experience is the superb selection of foods, freshly prepared on-site, in a comfortable, community-building environment.



Fig. 11. Also in the woodturning building is an extensive collection of woodturnings from masters around the world.



Fig. 9. The mini-lathe woodworking studio is equipped with all the equipment and supplies needed to present a wide variety of woodturning programs.



Fig. 12. In addition to the workshops, symposiums, and conferences, and local student programs, Arrowmont has yearlong, artist-in-residence programs.