

## University of Alabama at Birmingham Center for Alabama Culture

### Contact

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### Context

As the University of Alabama at Birmingham widens its footprint in downtown Birmingham and leaves its mark on Alabama and the nation, it is positioned to create a lasting cultural record that reflects the diversity, joy, and enterprise of Alabamians. I propose a “living museum” of Southern art and culture that includes a museum, archive, performance space, and cafeteria. As Humanities departments crumble at most universities, UAB will show a commitment to the study and preservation of the arts. By bringing together different disciplines and diverse peoples, UAB will be able to rewrite a history of the South as a collection of artists and thinkers who have created a complex, multifaceted culture out of diverse mother cultures. By envisioning and writing such a history, we can create a legacy for future collaboration and cultural productivity.

### Vision

To heal racial, religious and cultural rifts in the Southeast by teaching, recording, and presenting a shared cultural legacy. To center and give voice to Alabama so that “red state” differences between it and other parts of the country might be better understood, or the differences debunked and similarities celebrated. To set a precedent for healing cultural rifts through shared education, arts, and history.

### Mission

To teach, record, display, celebrate, and expand the history of Southern culture, including visual, musical, and performing arts, with a focus on the complex cultural history of Alabama.

### Scale

- Oral archives of Southern song, music, poetry, folktales, histories, and stories including backups and access to current oral archives that are [spread out](#) and difficult to access.
- Digitized, accessible lectures and events including live streaming events, archives, and related class materials
- Recording equipment to create oral and musical archives, record events, and establish MOOCs to spread courses for wider understanding of Southern culture
- Paper and digital archives of the history of Southern art and culture
- Events, including lectures, performances, readings, art gallery openings, etc. that address both past and current cultural production in the Southeast.
- Multiple event spaces including a black box space and a 300-seat stadium-seating auditorium space with audiovisual capabilities

- Gallery space for current Alabama cultural production including but not limited to a gallery space for the UAB Art Department
- A non-religious meditation or prayer space
- Smart classrooms and seminar spaces for multidisciplinary engagement with the Museum's collections
- A cafeteria space that uses UAB student currencies and other currencies that celebrates Southern foodways and local produce
- A working rooftop garden that produces typical Southern crops for use in the Cafeteria
- An outdoor patio/green space for large-scale holiday celebrations that links to an obvious parade route for "collective joy"

### **Inspiration Board**

[Smithsonian National Museum of the American Indian](#) / [Mitsitam Café](#)

[Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture](#) / [Sweet Home Café](#)

[Southern Foodways Alliance](#)

[Ogden Museum of Southern Art](#)

### **Alliances**

Abroms-Engel Institute for Visual Arts

Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame

Alabama Music Hall of Fame

Alabama School of Fine Arts

Alys Stephens Center

Birmingham Civil Rights Institute

Birmingham Holocaust Educational Center

Birmingham Museum of Art

Center for Southern Folklore

The Hank Williams Museum

Huntsville Museum of Art

Jefferson County Library Cooperative

Jones Valley Teaching Farm

Local schools and universities

Mobile Museum of Art

Mobile Carnival Museum

Moundville Archaeological Park

Ogden Museum of Southern Art

The Scott and Zelda Fitzgerald Museum

Southern Poverty Law Center

UAB Humanities and Social Sciences

Woodlawn Foundation