

## The History of Sloss Furnaces

Sloss Furnaces, located in Birmingham, Alabama was one of the largest manufacturers of pig iron in the southeast United States. James Withers Sloss, a north Alabama merchant and railroad man, launched the Sloss Furnace Company in 1881. Sloss Furnaces produced a type of iron called *pig iron*, which was used as a component in the creation of cast-iron pipe and steel. Since all the necessary components for producing pig-iron could be found in the nearby Jones Valley area, Birmingham was an ideal location for the company. The blast furnaces that were built at the Sloss site brought an influx of immigrants and rural Alabamians to Birmingham to work for Sloss and related industries and thrust Birmingham into the Industrial Revolution.

Production at Sloss Furnaces was discontinued during the early 1970's. In 1981 Sloss achieved National Historic Landmark status and in 1983 it opened to the public as an industrial museum. Sloss Furnaces is the only 20<sup>th</sup> century blast furnaces in the world that is being interpreted and preserved as an industrial museum.

## The Sloss Furnaces Metal Arts Program and Summary of Dance of the Cast-Iron Artists

Sloss Furnaces is a Birmingham tourist destination, center for community events, and home of one of the finest onsite metal arts programs in the United States. Working together, the artists-in-residence expand their metal arts skills while creating new works of art. In addition, they share their skills with others, such as young apprentices who come to Sloss Furnaces for summer programs. These artists create sculptures to be placed onsite and for sale in the Sloss Furnaces gift shop. They conduct educational outreach programs for visitors and schools.

Dance of the Cast-Iron Artists explores the process and elements of cast-iron art and compares the art form the process and elements of dance.

## Vocabulary

### Cast-Iron Art Vocabulary

**Cast-iron art**- a form of expression in which iron is melted and cast into a mold: its final form is an iron sculpture and/or work of visual art.

**Cast-iron art mold**- the container into which liquid cast-iron is poured. It creates the shape of the art when the liquid hardens into a solid.

**Cupola**- a shaft-like furnace with an opening at the top which can be closed with a lid. It is used to melt pig iron.

**Form**- the shape, visual appearance, or configuration of an object.

**Pattern**-a replica of the object to be cast.

**Protective leather clothing and rubber soled shoes**- garments designed to protect the wearer's body from

injury by blunt impacts, electrical hazards, heat, chemicals, and infection.

**Safety helmet**- made of a sturdy material and designed to protect the head and eyes from accidental injury.

**Shape**- the outlined appearance of a work of visual art, consisting of points, lines, curves and planes.

## Dance Vocabulary

**Ballet barre**- a handrail fixed to a wall, as in a dance studio, used by ballet dancers as a support in certain exercises.

**Ballet slippers**- lightweight shoes designed specifically for ballet dancing. Ballet slippers may be made from soft leather, canvas, or satin, and have flexible, thin soles. Traditionally, women wear pink shoes and men wear white, while flesh or tan colored shoes—which are unobtrusive and thus give the appearance of dancing barefoot—are worn in modern ballets by both men and women.

**Choreography**- the art of designing sequences of movement.

**Dance**- a form of expression using body movements that are rhythmic, patterned (or sometimes improvised), and usually accompanied by music.

**Form**- a specific way of performing or recreating a movement or expression.

**Leotard**- a unisex skin-tight one-piece garment that covers the torso but leaves the legs free.

**Pattern**: the building block for choreography; a series of patterns within dance movements that create an entire choreography.

**Shape**: an aspect of the element of space and a strong visual component in dance. The term shape may refer to individual body shapes (the way in which 3-dimensional space is used by the body) and group shapes. Body shapes are present in all actions in dance. Shapes in dance convey meaning.

Author:

Alabama Public Television

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