

KEN BURNS SAYS...

Since the Academy Award-nominated *Brooklyn Bridge* in 1981, Burns has directed and produced some of the most acclaimed historical documentaries ever made about different facets of America – from the Civil War to World War II; from baseball to jazz. Using archival photographs and musical motifs, Ken Burns creates films that tell us stories about our country's past and its culture.

"All story is manipulation."

"Do something that will last and be beautiful. It doesn't have to be a bridge-or a symphony or book or a business. It could be the look in the eye of a child you raise or a simple garden you tend. Do something that will last and be beautiful."

"In some ways, the easier way is to say that we've made the same film over and over again, asking one deceptively simple question—who are we? In institutions like baseball or jazz or searing events like the Civil War or the Second World War, in biographies of important Americans like Mark Twain and Frank Lloyd Wright, Huey Long, you learn something. You don't ever answer that question, but you deepen it with each successive project."

"History is malleable. A new cache of diaries can shed new light, and archeological evidence can challenge our popular assumptions."

"Good history is a question of survival. Without any past, we will deprive ourselves of the defining impression of our being."

"I think we too often make choices based on the safety of cynicism, and what we're lead to is a life not fully lived. Cynicism is fear, and it's worse than fear—it's active disengagement."

"All meaning accrues in duration. I believe that. I suggest that the work you most care about, and the relationships you most care about, have benefited from your sustained attention. The person you met two seconds ago is not the person you're in love with. It might take you 30 or 40 hours to read a good book. You know, 21 years ago, I was told by television critics that nobody would watch *The Civil War* because Steven Bochco's new musical drama *Cop Rock* was going to blow us out of the water. Well, *Cop Rock* was cancelled mid-season, and 40 million people watched *The Civil War*. If it's something people care about, they'll pay attention."

"I treat the photograph as a work of great complexity in which you can find drama. Add to that a careful composition of landscapes, live photography, the right music and interviews with people, and it becomes a style."

"I think filmmaking is obstacles. In fact, every film is a set of millions, literally—no exaggeration—millions of problems. But I use the word problems not so much pejoratively as if it's just resistances, friction that you have to overcome. The first film I wanted to do was tell the story of the Brooklyn Bridge. So people would slam the door and say, 'This child is trying to sell me the Brooklyn Bridge. No.' And for many years I kept two thick binders, three-ring binders of literally hundreds of rejections."