

Great Work(s)

Dyer Library – Saco Museum Narrative

1. Describe the project. Articulate the work, artists featured and/or interpretation in terms of highest artistic quality.

The Dyer Library and Saco Museum (DLSM) seek \$20,000 from the Maine Arts Commission's Great Works program in order to complete an ongoing project to make the *Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress* accessible to worldwide audiences in new and innovative ways. The *Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress*, also known as *Bunyan's Tableau*, is an extraordinary 8 x 850-foot long painting created in 1851 and presented to audiences nationwide throughout the second half of the 19th century. It is one of less than ten moving panoramas to survive worldwide. Precursors to the modern motion picture, moving panoramas consisted of immense lengths of canvases painted to depict popular stories, events, and locations of the time. Panoramas were presented by scrolling the massive canvas paintings across a stage from one gigantic spool to another, accompanied by a lecturer and music. The DLSM's panorama was one of the most important moving panoramas in the United States, emblematic of this genre of painting that bridged high art and popular culture. It was conceived, and designs were contributed, by members of the National Academy of Design in New York, including Frederic Edwin Church, Jasper Cropsey, Daniel Huntington, and others; thus it relates directly to the developing national school of landscape painting. Additionally, the subject matter places it squarely in the center of evolving American thought in religion and literature. John Bunyan's 1678 allegory *The Pilgrim's Progress*, on which the DLSM's panorama is based, is frequently cited as a predecessor to the modern novel and was a favorite among participants in the Revivalist movement associated with the Great Awakening.

This project began with a challenge grant from Save America's Treasures, which has allowed the entire panorama to be treated (at the Williamstown Art Conservation Center, or WACC, in Massachusetts) so that it is stable and exhibitable. Given that it is impossible to restore the panorama to the point where it may be presented in motion, as it was originally intended to be seen, the continuing project will also include the creation of a full-scale replica of the panorama: digital images printed on fabric and rolled onto two spools that can be "performed" using a mechanism based on historical models. No one alive today has ever seen a historic panorama performed in motion—this project will furnish that absolutely unique opportunity for residents of and visitors to Maine. The replica will be printed using high-resolution post-conservation photography from WACC's photo lab; the same photography will also be used to create a web-based interactive video, including narration and a musical soundtrack, that can be performed "on-demand" by panorama enthusiasts worldwide. The culmination of the panorama project will include a fully-illustrated publication with contributions by distinguished authors, a major exhibition scheduled for the summer of 2012, a distinguished lecture series, and an array of public programs for all ages.

The full cost for the project, including the conservation treatment of the panorama, has been budgeted at \$170,268. We have been fortunate to receive pledges and funding from Save America's Treasures, the Wyeth Foundation for American Art, the Maine Humanities Council, and Saco & Biddeford Savings Institution totaling \$96,940; however, there is \$73,328 (\$34,155 cash and \$39,173 in-kind) left to raise and/or allocate. Further, the \$25,000 award from the Wyeth Foundation is contingent upon our success in raising the full amount for the project, so completing the funding is particularly crucial. A \$20,000 award from the Maine Arts Commission would bring us close to the completion of our goals for outside funding and would ensure our ability to secure existing and additional pledges.

2. Describe your plan to develop and present related educational, interpretive, or contextual components. Document evidence of program planning.

The **replica and the video** will become the primary interpretive tools for the panorama in 2012 and thereafter. Both these project activities will share the following tasks: 1) the “knitting” together of individual post-conservation snapshots into a single, continuous image file; 2) development of a narrative script based on historical models in the DLSM’s and other public collections (details are available upon request); and 3) selection and arrangement of a musical accompaniment by a contemporary composer, based upon historical models. Production of the replica will also include the additional task of fabricating a mechanism that will enable it to be performed (scrolled from one large spool to another in front of an audience). This mechanism will be based upon historical models (an 1855 illustration of a moving panorama mechanism is available on http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moving_panorama), but since the mechanism will likely be hidden by curtains during performances, the emphasis for its construction will be on durability and ease of use rather than historical replication. Preliminary work in the form of consulting, sharing of image files, and historical research has already begun for both the replica and the video; however, the work will not begin in earnest on either of these project activities until May 2011, and will be completed well within the Great Works grant period (according to the parameters of the Save America’s Treasures award, their completion date is December 31, 2011; this may be extended no later than March 31, 2012). The “debut” of both the video and the replica—the launch of the video on the DLSM’s website and the initial public performance of the replica—will take place either in conjunction with or shortly before the opening of the panorama exhibition on June 29, 2012.

Within the same time frame that the replica and video are produced, the DLSM will also work to develop a **publication**, currently conceived as a modern edition of *The Pilgrim’s Progress* with all the major scenes in the panorama providing full-color illustrations. The book will include an introductory essay by a distinguished author: panorama scholar and former Metropolitan Museum of Art Curator Kevin Avery is one of the candidates, as is Erkki Huhtamo, a Professor of Media History at UCLA who has written widely about moving panoramas and the contributions of 19th-century visual entertainments to modern media and art. The DLSM plans to partner with a professional publisher—conversations with Kent State University Press are now in an advanced stage—to produce this publication. Though the release date may not be until late 2012, all of the writing and design should be complete by May 4, 2012, including payments made to a guest author or author(s) that are part of this grant request.

Because the panorama, at 850 running feet (four separate sections of approximately 200-250 feet each), is far too large to be presented in its entirety in the main exhibit space at the Saco Museum, the **major exhibition** planned for the summer of 2012 will be presented in two simultaneous locations. Two or three sections will be displayed within the Pepperell Mill Campus in our twin city of Biddeford: a large-scale, former industrial space that now houses apartments, artists’ studios, commercial outlets, and public spaces for exhibitions and events. The remaining section or sections will be displayed at the Saco Museum. The exhibition will include the original panorama as its primary artifact, along with related additional material from the DLSM’s collection, as well as selected loans from other public and private collections to give a broad view of the panorama craze in 19th-century America.

A distinguished **lecture series** is planned for the fall of 2012, making Saco and southern Maine a center for panorama-related studies. Prospective speakers may include Kevin Avery and Erkki Huhtamo, both of whom are mentioned above; Sara Velas, a contemporary artist who has created a modern moving panorama of California based upon an 1853 script; Suzanne Wray, a New York-based independent scholar and panorama expert; and representatives from Brown University and the New Bedford Whaling Museum, both of which also own moving panoramas.

Additional **public programs** will feature performances of the panorama replica in a variety of locations, from the Dyer Library and Saco Museum to the Pepperell Mill Campus and possibly Biddeford’s City

Theater. The DLSM is also in discussions with contemporary artist Sara Velas (mentioned above) to have performances at her contemporary moving panorama theater in Los Angeles. Other public programs will include tours and hands-on workshops tailored for a variety of audiences, including school children. The DLSM serves a diverse audience, including permanent and seasonal residents of Saco and its surrounding cities as well as tourists from all over the country and overseas. Among the many underserved groups that the DLSM regularly serves with tours and outreach programs are senior citizens in retirement communities and assisted-living facilities, at-risk students in local specialized education programs, and the mentally and physically disabled at local residential facilities. The museum plans to tailor specialized programs toward these specific audiences: seniors may be interested in the panorama's role in the development of American cinema, for instance, while students may explore the literary significance of *Pilgrim's Progress*. The subject matter of the panorama will also provide an avenue to build bridges to Christian churches and Christian home-schooling communities, another group often underserved by public museums. Saco Bay is a summertime retreat for various religious organizations, including Unitarian Universalists (Ferry Beach) and Methodists (the Temple at Ocean Park), and we plan to approach them with ideas for special programs and tours. Because the panorama is based upon a major work of literature, it will also provide opportunities for cross-institutional activities including both the Dyer Library and Saco Museum, perhaps in cooperation with English classes at Saco's Thornton Academy or Biddeford's University of New England.

3. Describe how you will make the project highly visible? Describe the project's statewide and/or regional impact.

Visibility and access are the cornerstones of the project activities for which we seek funding from the Maine Arts Commission. The Save America's Treasures award and the conservation phase of the project have already generated local and national press as well as inspired special events. For instance, the DLSM held a "Panorama Send-off" event on January 12, 2010, at which Representative Chellie Pingree was present, and the conservation of the panorama was a subject of the Antiques column in the *New York Times* on December 2, 2010. The DLSM also plans to participate in the annual conference of the International Panorama Council in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, September 14-18, 2011, with an update on the panorama's treatment. In the upcoming phases of the project, the dramatic presentations of the replica and the launching of the video will have their own individual publicity campaigns. Each viewing will provide the Maine Arts Commission with an opportunity to promote its support of this important historical object. The publication of the illustrated edition of *Pilgrim's Progress*, the mounting of the exhibition, the lecture series, and selected public programs will also benefit from dedicated publicity campaigns, which will include regional and national press releases, articles in the Maine Archives and Museums newsletter (Jessica Routhier, this project's director, is a board member and the newsletter editor), postings on the DLSM's website and social networking fansites, direct mail, and e-vites, as well as posters and paid advertising.

The successful completion of this project will allow residents of Maine and New England to take pride in the fact that one of the very few moving panoramas to survive anywhere is preserved in the collection of one of their regional museums. Programming focused on the presentation of the replica and video will provide regional residents with the opportunity to learn more about the histories of cinema, fine arts, theology, and theater in America. The project will also reach a global audience—international interest in panoramas is strong—thanks to the publication, the presentation of the video on the DLSM's website, and the DLSM's participation in the International Panorama Council. Additionally, the visibility generated by the publication, the exhibition, the lecture series, and other programs will increase cultural tourism to this area and elevate the profile of the state as a destination for heritage travel.

4. List any collaborators and their role in the project.

Resumes for Jessica Routhier and Camille Smalley are included as part of this application package. Resumes for other project participants are available upon request.

Jessica Routhier, Project Director and Museum Director, Dyer Library and Saco Museum

Role: Oversee all project activities, develop script for replica and video, write captions and introduction for publication, coordinate major exhibition

Camille Smalley, Education and Program Manager, Dyer Library and Saco Museum

Role: Develop and oversee all public programming related to the panorama project, including the lecture series and performances of the replica.

Tom Branchick, Director, Williamstown Art Conservation Center, Massachusetts

Role: Oversee conservation treatment of panorama and production of photography

Paul Glynn and Andy Graham, Portland Color, Maine

Role: Use post-conservation photography to print replica; advise and assist with development of a mechanism to enable its performance

Bill Millos, Back Lot Films, Fremont, New Hampshire

Role: Use post-conservation photography and a script provided by the DLSM to produce a web-based interactive video of the panorama; contract with a contemporary musician to arrange and record a musical score for the video

Kent State University Press, Kent, Ohio (contact: Joyce Harrison, acquisitions editor)

Role: Oversee production of publication and underwrite a portion of the costs

Guest author(s) TBD

Role: Write scholarly essay as preface to the publication

DLSM Art Handler (to be hired on a project basis in 2012)

Role: Plan and execute all display needs for the panorama exhibition, including performances of the replica and display of the original panorama at the Saco Museum and Pepperell Mill. Provide security detail as needed.

Doug Sanford, CEO, Pepperell Mill Campus

Role: Identify and provide space in Pepperell Mill Campus for the display of the panorama.

5. Provide URL links to demonstrate the quality of your marketing artistic programming. When available, provide links to show the work of artists that will be and involved in your project.

Slide show of the *Moving Panorama of Pilgrim's Progress* (note that these are pre-conservation photographs, taken before treatment): http://www.sacomuseum.org/mus_pilgrims.shtml

Project update on museum director's blog (with images), September 15, 2010:

http://sacomuseum.org/blog_museum/?p=146

Before-and-after conservation photos on museum director's blog, January 20, 2011:

http://sacomuseum.org/blog_museum/?p=210

Example of moving panorama mechanism: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moving_panorama