

The New York City Fire Museum seeks to hire art conservationists

September 19, 2008

Deadline for applications: October 15, 2008

The New York City Fire Museum seeks to hire one or several art conservators to restore several badly damaged works in the collection.

Project Description

The New York City Fire Department Collection consists of more than 10,000 artifacts - ranging from items as small as lapel pins to full-size motorized apparatus. Currently, a Project Manager is undergoing rationalization and improvement of the current variety of cataloging systems. This includes triage and cataloging of numerous items received following 9/11, which currently have temporary registration numbers or none at all, elaboration of the current list of restoration needs, and physical triage and organization of the artifacts in storage. An improved storage system will be implemented to safeguard items not on display. At the same time that the evaluation/cataloging are conducted, a thorough photographic and written documentation of the collection is being undertaken. In addition to the evaluation and data entry, the Museum plans to proceed with the stabilization and restoration of artifacts already identified by curators and outside experts as being in most immediate need. Other artifacts in need of prompt attention will be identified as the result of the project.

Works currently identified as in need of restoration include:

1. Painted panel/shooting target, Neptune Engine Co. No. 2:

Conservation need: The wooden piece has cracked across the center and is in need of cleaning. The piece, currently in storage, is shown on p. 34 of *As You Pass By*.

Reason for selecting: The Museum has nothing on display relating to the target clubs in which many volunteer firefighters participated. The Fourth Annual Report of the Metropolitan Fire Department notes in a comparison of parades before and after the paid department that "a system of formation and marching...takes the place of the target companies armed with real muskets so general in the volunteer department."

2. Painting of hand drawn ladder truck, framed in a wagon wheel, c. 1900:

Conservation need: canvas has no stretcher or lining and has completely separated from frame (where it was attached with old nails and contemporary staples) and collapsed in folds. Painting depicts a hand-drawn ladder truck absent from, but contemporary with, "parade" display on Museum's second floor. Canvas is buckled, badly out of plane, dirty, with scratches and abrasions.

3. Roster, Engine 17, Brooklyn Fire Department, 1861:

Conservation need: This very large piece is extremely brittle, with acid and water damage, one significant tear and hole and numerous smaller ones. This ink and gouache on paper piece is unique. There are numerous reasons to choose it for immediate conservation; most significantly, the border consists of detailed drawings of each of Brooklyn's firehouses and a depiction of Colonel Ellsworth, founder of the Fire Zouaves, who had just been killed and is presumed to have been the first military death of the Civil War.

4. Painting on Canvas of Fire in Barnum's Museum, New York City:

Conservation need: The canvas is unstretched at the moment and stored in a flat file. There are a few small losses in the paint, several tears, including one large tear in the area of the flames and many small holes. The painting is covered with a thick layer of grime and a discolored layer of varnish. This is a representation of the best known Barnum fire and is frequently reproduced in prints of the era.

5. Painted and gilded wood and fabric shadow-box with re-ribboned collection of medals exhibited at the 1939 World's Fair:

Conservation need: Backing material for medals needs to be replaced and medals remounted. The wood case needs scratches and dents repaired and new paint and gilding. This is unique collection of medals with an historic connection. The Museum currently has nothing similar on display.

Other items, including a large wall-clock with cracked mercury weights and a badly damaged paint of Chief of Department Chester Croker may be included in a later RFP depending on the availability of funds for restoration as the project progresses.

Project Schedule

Because of the variation in the complexity of the projects and the condition of the works of art scheduled for restoration, project schedules will be established in writing at the time of the contract award. Conservators who may have previously submitted bids for restoration of these items are asked to confirm their continued interest in writing along with any changes in treatment or cost.

Submission requirements

Those interested are invited to submit a cover letter and resume no later than 5:00 PM EST on October 15, 2008. The proposal should include the proposer's experience with similar projects (please include references and contact information), proposer's approach, methods, availability, anticipated timeline, and fee structure. Proposers are invited to examine the works listed above and submit detailed, individual proposals for each work considered within their competence. It is not anticipated that any one conservator will be awarded all of the various projects, however, conservators are invited to submit proposals for as many restoration projects as within their competence.

Proposers interested in submitting proposals to provide such services are required to follow the recommended guidelines and instructions contained in this Request for Proposal ("RFP"). In the event it becomes necessary to revise any part of this RFP, revisions will be provided by addenda posted on the Museum's website:
www.NYCFIREMUSEUM.org

Questions may be submitted in writing to Judith Jamison, Director, or by e-mail, to jjamison@nycfiremuseum.org

Deliver or mail all materials to:
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