

Request for Proposal (RFP):

Solicitation Information

Textile stabilization services and exhibition preparation for America's longest painting: New Bedford Whaling Museum's 19th century moving "Grand Panorama of a Whaling Voyage Around the World"

OBJECTIVE: To strengthen and stabilize a 1,275 foot long distemper on cotton sheeting painting, currently rolled and divided among six separate drums for temporary or long-term vertical display in a serpentine or spiral layout.

TIMELINE: Textile stabilization must be completed by September 2017, with additional preparation / attachments made as necessary to enable exhibition in June 2018.

Submission deadline: July 25, 2016

Pre bid / Proposal tele-conference to be held Friday July 15, 2016, 10 AM. (Participation optional).

Contact D. Jordan Berson, Collections Manager of the New Bedford Whaling Museum for inclusion and call-in instructions: jberson@whalingmuseum.org or Tel. (508) 717-6845. Questions concerning this solicitation may be addressed to same. Supporting examination documentation and photographs are available upon request.

INTRODUCTION:

- a) The New Bedford Whaling Museum hereby solicits proposals and bids from a qualified Textile Conservation Firm (sometimes referred to in this RFP as a Vendor, Offeror, or Bidder) to provide textile stabilization services for the purpose of long term preservation and safe handling / hanging / display of the artifact during temporary exhibition(s).
- b) Responses shall be evaluated on the basis of the relative merits of the proposal as they relate to the care and end-use of the object, the qualifications of the offeror and price. The selected offeror must comply with standards of the American Institute for Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works (AIC).

BACKGROUND:

- a) The New Bedford Whaling Museum owns a rare example of a 19th century distemper-on-cotton moving panorama painted by local banker turned whaleman and artist Benjamin Russell, in collaboration with Fairhaven, Massachusetts sign painter Caleb Pierce Purrington. It was received into the museum collection in 1918 after years of travelling exhibition and local storage. The Panorama which is thought to have originally been sectioned in thirds is now housed on separate rolls / drums. The total length of the painting is now approximately 1,275

feet long. Its exact original length is unknown as the final scene of the panorama was missing upon receipt by the museum in 1918 and remains absent today. At least two of the six rolls have been lined for exhibition during an early treatment, and several conservation campaigns have been recorded to have occurred over time (full documentation files available for reference). An original feature of the Panorama is a rope bead along the top edge originally used for even support and tensioning during suspension while on display. Proposals must include a plan for mimicking this weight-bearing function while eliminating use of the original, weakened bead. All condition issues are documented in detailed notes and photographs, and will be available for reference throughout the project.

- b) The distemper paint used by the artists were deteriorated and powdery, at risk of loss during handling by falling off the cotton sheeting substrate during rolling, and offsetting from the surface to the recto of the substrate while rolled. Consolidation of the media has been ongoing, misting a mild gelatin solution over the surface of the panorama, using proven methods employed during another high-profile panorama conservation initiative. The stabilized media will be secure during the commencing textile work.
- c) A mechanical table has recently been custom fabricated for the purpose of providing a conveyance for the panorama during media consolidation. Said table may be used as-is, modified, or eliminated in favor of another means of conveyance / support during textile conservation. Additionally, textile work may be performed in house or transported off site as per bidder's requirements
- d) The current intent of the New Bedford Whaling Museum is to complete this project and have the object readied for exhibition by June 2018.

REQUIREMENTS:

The Textile Conservation Services firm will be responsible for:

- a. Stabilization and strengthening of the substrate to enable safe handling and vertical display. This may entail guarding at the head and / or lining the entire cotton substrate, or employ another method to achieve the objectives using the existing custom conveyance table. In lieu of using the existing table and drum system, another support apparatus may be fabricated by bidder.
- b. Working with museum staff support, transportation and handling of the six rolls during treatment as needed. Housing / storage in secure climate controlled environment during treatment if bidder elects to perform treatment offsite.
- c. Using existing condition documentation reports and performing in-person examination as needed for making ethical, informed and effective treatment decisions.
- d. Determining and specifying materials and supplies to be used during treatment. Material and supply procurement will be responsibility of the New Bedford Whaling Museum, unless another agreement is made between bidder and the New Bedford Whaling Museum.

- e. Before, during and after treatment high-definition photographs of individual mends performed. Overall before and after treatment / digitization will be undertaken by the New Bedford Whaling Museum
- f. Providing proof of being fully bonded and insured, with the following general requirements:
 - a. Provide Certificate of Insurance for the insurance that, if selected, will need to be in force at all times during the contract period. Insurance company coverage must be with a current AM Best's rating of no less than A and include the following coverages:
 - b. Commercial General Liability \$1,000,000 each occurrence
 - c. Excess/Umbrella Liability \$1,000,000
 - 1. Indemnification endorsement covering the additional insured's and owner.
 - 2. Insurance to be primary and non-contributory.
 - 3. Contain no exclusions for means, methods, techniques, sequences or procedures.
 - 4. General Aggregate to apply on a per project basis.
 - 5. Contain a deductible of no more the \$ 25,000.

RESPONSES:

Because of the rarity and historic importance of this artifact the successful bidder must have a high degree of experience performing conservation on oversize historic textiles. Qualifications will be assessed using the following required documentation:

- a) Resume / Curriculum Vitae for principals including, but not limited to the project manager and key personnel who will be involved with this project including a list of relevant conservation projects of oversized textiles with which they were directly involved.
- b) History of conservation experience including list of representative projects with final cost and description of work (e.g. treatment reports as possible).
- c) Detailed list of any claims, litigation or cancellation of contracts against the individuals or projects listed.
- d) A list of three references including current contact information.

Bidder must furnish a fee proposal, either in the form of a total lump sum or hourly rate with estimated number of hours to complete the project. This fee proposal should account for travelling time and associated expenses if applicable.

Responses will be evaluated by New Bedford Whaling Museum staff and third-party conservation professionals.

Bids must be received by the New Bedford Whaling Museum by 5 PM, Monday July 25, 2016 by email to: jberson@whalingmuseum.org

Or via mail to:

D. Jordan Berson, Collections Manager
New Bedford Whaling Museum
18 Johnny Cake Hill
New Bedford, Mass. 02740

ALL PROPOSALS RECEIVED ARE TO BE CONSIDERED PROPERTY OF THE NEW BEDFORD WHALING MUSEUM.