

Van Briggle Pottery Intellectual Property Committee Draft recommendations

June 4, 2019

Van Briggle materials at Colorado College

The trove of Van Briggle Pottery materials recently acquired by Colorado College (hereafter “Stevenson-Murphy Collection” or SMC) and now under assessment for future disposition and deployment holds broad potential for both college and community. These documents and three-dimensional objects emerge from the secondary period of Van Briggle production, long after the death of Artus Van Briggle, the eminent Art Nouveau ceramist who founded the enterprise with his wife Anne in 1901; the papers and artifacts constituting the SMC pertain chiefly to the period in which the Van Briggle trademark was continued under the leadership of Kenneth Stevenson after 1969. These materials nonetheless have more than retrospective significance because they represent designs and techniques for Van Briggle’s later ceramic production and, more generally, primary sources in the history of the arts and the economy of Colorado Springs.

Making use of Van Briggle objects and documents

The material of the SMC is potentially useful in the context of Colorado College’s liberal arts mission and its commitment to community and regional engagement in a variety of ways. The college’s ownership of the original architectural monument of the Van Briggle atelier, the current Colorado College Facilities Services building, renders the college an important voice in discussion of the regional Van Briggle heritage apart from the acquisition at issue here. Further, as a leading custodian and exponent of regional artistic heritage and local history, Colorado College is obliged to make these materials available—to both its own students and faculty and the people of the Pikes Peak region more generally—as tools for teaching and research, and as exemplars for fresh production of ceramics.

In the present Van Briggle Committee, the college has invited other community stakeholders to imagine appropriate uses for the SMC. This group has envisioned multiple outcomes for this assemblage of later Van Briggle Pottery materials, among which might be

- permanent and temporary exhibitions in the old Van Briggle building and/or around the college and city, possibly co-curated by Colorado College and Colorado Springs Pioneers’ Museum staffs
- provision for direct study of Van Briggle artifacts and documents in relation to this and other Art Nouveau and ceramics collections, especially at the Pioneers Museum and Colorado College’s Special Collections, again through consultation by the college’s and Pioneers’ Museum’s staffs
- the papers in the SMC should go to Colorado College Special Collections. Jessy Randall will work with Jeremiah Houck and CC Facilities to move the papers (approximately 20 linear feet of photographs, ledgers, correspondence, files, and other papers) from Bemis Art School to the library. By the fall of 2020 (possibly earlier), CC Special Collections will

process the collection and researchers will be able to use the papers in the Special Collections reading room, under the supervision of Special Collections staff.

- encouragement of teaching of art criticism and studio art through attention to Van Briggie products and molds in Colorado College studio classes and at the Fine Arts Center's Bemis School of Art
- facilitation of movement of materials from possible offsite storage to on-campus or other accessible sites when a suitable location is identified and secured
- subject to preceding discussions about art-historical appropriateness and training of Bemis School of Art staff by Van Briggie experts, revival of the long tradition of Van Briggie tile-making using historical molds for decoration of public spaces in Colorado Springs—either in trademarked lineage or in response to Van Briggie inspiration
- appropriate use or reservation of the Van Briggie trademark as determined by counsel
- digital access to elements in the collection and analysis of their regional and national importance, and management of ongoing Van Briggie web presence
<http://www.vanbriggie.com/>
- consideration of space provision in a new Bemis School of Art complex for future use of Van Briggie molds

Next steps

In this committee's judgment, development of any of these possibilities requires due attention to professional best practices in preservation and curation. Further production directly from Van Briggie artifacts requires legal counsel on use of the Van Briggie trademark and documents of technical details. The multiple purposes for which the collection might eventually be used suggest the appropriateness of multiple venues for storage, exhibition, and direct access.

Decisions about retention of elements in the collection, potential gifts or long-term loans to the Pioneers Museum as the premier public repository of Van Briggie artifacts, disposition through gift or sale of elements of lesser value for teaching and historic preservation, and display or usage in collaboration with the Fine Arts Center, Bemis School of Art, and other local arts facilities such as Manitou Arts- and Cottonwood Centers, should proceed from consultations with the respective curatorial and teaching staffs. It should embrace, as well, the curator of Colorado College's Special Collections, the college's Art and History Departments, and the college's Arts and Crafts Program. Toward this end, the college should designate an internal department or program to oversee all aspects of SMC usage and storage, or appoint a steering committee representative of interested offices to:

- retention and consultation of legal counsel
- decision on which materials to retain
- arrangement for storage, archiving, curation, and long-term or periodic exhibition of SMC documents and objects
- promotion of these materials' use for teaching, research, and production purposes
- provision, through pursuit of endowed funds or reallocation of existing college resources, of start-up and continuing budget for
 - training of personnel

- moving and storage of objects
- legal fees
- website maintenance

The present committee recognizes that the primary value of the Van Briggie intellectual and physical property it has been charged to consider, here labeled SMC, lies in those materials' potential for building Colorado College's relationships with the local arts, preservation, and public history communities. We have here outlined parameters for husbanding SMC resources according to the college's central missions of teaching and learning as extended from our campus to the Pikes Peak region.

In order to optimally realize this development, we counsel that a Van Briggie resources steering committee be constituted. Its representation should include the Curator of Colorado College Special Collections, the Curator of History of the Pioneers Museum, the Assistant Director of the Bemis School of Art, and representatives of the college's Arts and Crafts program, History Department, and Art Department respectively. This committee might appropriately be chaired by the Director of Fine Arts Center; it would likely meet infrequently, but the voices of all the constituencies named here should be formally included. Future needs and sensibilities may invite different deployments of the Van Briggie materials acquired by the college, and structures should be set in place to respond to those potential changes, so exemplifying the responsive partnership mandated in Colorado College's linked commitments to teaching, learning, and community engagement.

APPENDIX

Colorado College

Van Briggle Pottery Intellectual Property Exploratory Committee Charge

Building on the initial ideas from the Bemis School of Art Implementation Committee, the Van Briggle Pottery Intellectual Property Exploratory Committee is asked to explore how the college can utilize the intellectual property in a manner that honors the pottery's history, our sense of place and the overall mission and core values of the college. As the intellectual property could have many implications throughout the campus and within the Colorado Springs community, many voices will need to be heard by the committee before any final recommendations are submitted. The following questions will guide the work of the committee.

Guiding Questions:

- *In what ways can the history of the Van Briggle pottery and the current intellectual property rights be honored and used while serving the mission and core values of the college?*
- *How might (new) programming using the intellectual property be aligned with the implementation recommendations of the Bemis School of Art and the Fine Arts Center strategic plan?*
- *What structures would need to be put in place to support the ideas generated by this committee?*

The committee will begin working in late April and will conclude with a report to the President and Provost by June 2019.

Proposed Committee Membership:

- George Eckhardt, Facilities/Historic Structures
- Jeanne Steiner, Arts & Crafts
- Jeremiah Houck, Bemis School of Art
- Claire Swinford, Downtown Partnership Rep and informed, interested citizen
- Leah Davis Witherow, Colorado Springs Pioneers Museum Curator of History
- Roxanne Eflin, Historic Preservation Alliance of Colorado Springs
- Max Vasquez, CC Student/Arts & Crafts
- Ellen Buford, CC Student/Arts & Crafts
- Laura Hines, Associate Director, Corporate & Foundation Relations
- Jessy Randall, College Archivist & Curator of Special Collections

Proposed Chair

- Carol Neel, Professor of History

Committee Support

- Lyrae Williams, Associate Vice President, Institutional Planning & Effectiveness

RECOMMENDATION #2: Van Briggle Pottery

The Creativity Complex Committee respectfully recommends that a group be formed, comprised of representatives from across campus and possibly appropriate community representation (e.g. Pioneers Museum, arts & crafts historians?), to explore and propose a direction for the Van Briggle Pottery intellectual property acquisition. With the recent acquisition by CC of the trademarks, tradenames, molds, tools, and other physical and intellectual property assets of the historic Van Briggle Pottery enterprise, there is a need to identify how these assets can be properly activated and for a plan to be developed to implement the activation.

Because of the sensitivity of the original Van Briggle designs and molds pre-1930s versus the more contemporary iterations of Van Briggle works under subsequent ownership, careful consideration and examination must be undertaken to assess the inventory of acquired property and potential opportunities for future engagement.