

Bulman Karen

From: Paul.Porter@state.sd.us
Sent: Tuesday, October 12, 2010 4:30 PM
To: Bulman Karen
Cc: hilyo@qwest.net; ChrisB.Nelson@state.sd.us
Subject: Van Nuys Gallery Window

Dear Karen,

I just spoke with Brian Bode and he asked if I would share my findings with you regarding the stained glass window at the Van Nuys Gallery.

I spoke at great length with Christy Jensen about the window, and I have also worked on stained glass windows myself so I am familiar with their composition, structural stability needs, and the relative labor involved in repairing a window such as this one. When she examined the window she indicated that all the lead coming had become brittle and was prone to breakage. We discussed the methodology for removing the window to repair it. In this case, boards would need to be cut to cover the full width of the window inside and out, and then have scaffolding erected on both sides, and a large crew to work together to carefully remove the window, tilt it out flat without bending or warping it causing more glass breakage and maneuvering it to the ground where it can be taken apart in sections to be taken to her shop to be rebuilt. The putty inside the coming that seals the glass in place is very difficult to remove and is a time consuming process. So when you consider how many people you have to pay on the crew, the time involved to clean and recondition all the glass pieces, and then rebuild the window, her estimate of \$37,500 is not out of the question for a reasonable cost estimate. I have been told that the first estimate was \$28,000 from another shop, although I did not speak with them. I also saw a copy of the \$5400 estimate that has recently come in. To be quite frank, I don't think this latest estimate was well flushed out or thoroughly examined the problem.

In the case of this window, the window dates to 1917, which is still in the period of significance for this building, hence my Adverse Effect finding. However, the lead coming has deteriorated throughout the window to the point of being very brittle and breaking easily. Lead as a material is a pliant substance that doesn't have a lot of structural stability. In examining the design of the window, it was designed very poorly with little support to keep it in vertical alignment. A well made stained glass window will have several vertical supports in place to keep the window from buckling and falling over time due to weight and environmental deterioration. Over the years, several attempts have been made to repair this window (and they were poorly done repairs in my opinion), but every time the lead coming is cut for a repair, it weakens the entire structure around it. At this point, the window is a public safety hazard (especially on the left end as you can see about a 1/4" gap where the coming has come completely separated from the glass), as if it collapses it could cause serious injury from flying glass to anyone on the sidewalk or inside the building. Not only that, it could open up the potential for a large lawsuit against the property owner, which is causing him a great deal of anxiety over the situation.

Chris Nelson and I went to Rapid City on October 4th and looked at the window first hand and spoke with Brian Bode about the problem. We talked about the Deadwood grant funding, but even with that, it is not an affordable repair for him at this time. He also had photographs of the building when it was new and had it's full Italianate design features. The original configuration had clear glass panels set into wood frames with rounded arch tops to accentuate the Italianate design features of the building. The central entrance was recessed and the upper windows turned into that recess. At present the design divisions of the stained glass window are two sections on the left, and a long section on the right, but they do not align with the symmetrical storefront windows or the central entrance below which is visually jarring. Mr. Bode proposes to put in plate glass windows that are symmetrically aligned with the storefront divisions, and match the character of the right half of the building and the adjoining building to the right in the design flow. We feel that this is a reasonable alternative, since there doesn't seem to be a feasible or prudent alternative to removing the damaged stained glass window. The last thing our office would want to have happen is for that window to collapse and injure someone, and have us be partially responsible for that because of the delays caused by discussions of this problem. We urge the board to approve the alternative design suggestions by the property owner. If you feel more comfortable with a design sketch of what he is proposing, then I think that would be a prudent thing to ask for.

And for the record, I am a fan of stained glass windows so I asked the property owner if he would be willing to salvage the glass pieces, should there be a financial opportunity to rebuild the stained glass window in the future. But in this case, public safety matters more than stained glass design aesthetics.

If you need further information to make an informed decision in this matter, please feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Best regards,

Paul Porter, Restoration Specialist
South Dakota State Historical Society
State Historic Preservation Office
Cultural Heritage Center
900 Governors Drive
Pierre, SD 57501
(605) 773-6005
(605) 773-6041 (Fax)