

Enamel Center Vision

Submitted by Judy Stone

What Is an Enamel Center ?

An Enamel Center would be a tangible space which would have the broad goals of advancing and preserving enameling in the United States. The specifics for achieving those goals are listed below. Right now, such a Center does not exist so the sky is the limit on what can be achieved with proper funding and planning. Below is a **wish list** of what could be done if the funding were there in abundance. The reality is that whatever happens and however small the Center has to be in order to exist, it can exist.

My role in getting this project off the ground is as a visionary, out-of-the-box thinker, instigator, networker, communicator, and beggar for money. Once it has legs of its own I can happily leave a Center in more capable hands than I can provide.

Why an Enamel Center?

Having an Enamel Center signals to the world that this medium is important.

The medium of enameling is relatively invisible today both in the arts and crafts marketplace and to the general public. In the U. S. enameling has a reputation for something that was done in summer camp as a child and is often called "copper enameling." It is time that a U. S. audience becomes aware of the wonderful diversity of enamel art being produced today and the history behind the development of that diversity. An Enamel Center can help build that awareness.

An Enamel Center can nurture and a growing community of enamelists who want to exhibit and sell their work, teach, and become passionate supports of the medium.

An Enamel Center, through strategic partnerships, can be a vital player in local economic development as well in the local arts community in which it will exist.

In addition, a Center that provides a large scale enameling facility would make enameling a desirable medium for 2-D artists, sculptors, and the public art sector of the arts community. It could also be available for artists interested in making small volume functional porcelain enameled steel objects such as furniture, household accessories, and architectural elements. The net outcome of providing a large-scale facility is to give the porcelain enamel industry a shot in the arm by encouraging the association of artists and designers with that industry.

Why on the West Coast?

Although there could be enameling centers, such as the one described in this vision statement, anywhere in the U. S. The West Coast, and particularly the Bay Area, is where I live and where I have the most contacts, resources, and networks. Strategic partnership possibilities are abundant. KVO Industries, one of the few industrial enameling firms in the U. S. that has worked with artists, is close by and has already indicated it would like to be a partner in this project. Other partners locally include art centers, colleges, supply centers, galleries, governmental organizations and committees, etc. The Bay Area is easily accessible by all forms of transit. The public transit systems are very good, especially BART, our subway system. The diverse urban environment is very rich in artistic energy and innovation.

The recession has affected real estate values so there is currently an abundance of vacant properties that could be leased. Property values are categorically higher in the Bay Area but in municipalities such as Oakland, Alameda, Richmond, Vallejo, Santa Rosa, Sacramento, and even Marin County, there is still affordable space.

And finally, there is an excited and willing group of people who live on the West Coast, from San Diego to Seattle, and would like to make the West Coast an enameling destination.

The Goals of an Enamel Center

1. Education

a) Classes and Workshops

Although many adult education art centers and accredited academic institutions offer enameling classes/workshops, it is very rare that there is dedicated classroom space solely for enameling education.

Although there is no degree program currently for enamel, the Center could potentially partner with a local art school to get courses at the center accredited. It is important that the Center remain independent of academia because of the volatility of funding for other academic art projects that has occurred over the last decade or longer.

The Center would have at least 2 dedicated class room spaces for instructors to teach both introductory and specialty enameling classes and workshops on a year round basis. Since enameling also draws heavily from all the metalworking disciplines there would need to be additional dedicated classroom space that incorporates metalworking tools and equipment. Eventually the center could offer the ability to fabricate all kinds of work in both ferrous and non-ferrous metals. In the beginning it is feasible to create partnerships with organizations, such as the Crucible or Tech Shop in the Bay Area, that offer all kinds of metal fabricating capabilities, including 3D proto-typing.

Because enameling is really a composite medium, the Center would reach out to metalworkers and glass artists who want to add enameling to their repertoire of skills. It would offer the opportunity for enamelists to further their metalworking skills and learn more about glass technology.

Because classroom space would be set up for the learning of all kinds of enameling, the Center could bring in guest instructors on a regular basis, similar to other adult school models such as Arrowmont, Touchstone. Penland, Haystack and John C. Campbell Folk School.

It is important that the classroom spaces be inviting for all age groups; that it meet EPA, OSHA, ADA, and all safety requirements according to local and state laws.

b) Artist-in-Residency Program

The Center would establish an artist-in-residency program in which qualified candidates receive work experience, continuing education opportunities, and eventually the ability to live and work on site. Artists-in-residence would be expected to serve as studio technicians, teachers, and to undertake other staff roles a part of their residency.

c) Youth education

Educational opportunities could also be provided for youth from 12 to 18 in after-school programs, summer camps, and ongoing weekend youth classes. Children under 12 would also be welcome after a program for older youth is established.

d) Lectures and Programs for the general public and interested enamelists about enamel

Everything from enamel history to collecting could be subject matter. These programs could and should complement current exhibitions in the area.

2. Exhibitions

The number of exhibitions showing enameled objects has greatly increased over the past 10 years which ultimately makes the medium more visible to the general public. There is however a need for a permanent gallery space.

A gallery space that is solely dedicated to exhibiting enamels has several advantages over most gallery spaces. First, the gallery design can take into account the lighting that enamel needs to be shown effectively and secondly, can provide fixtures such as pedestals with vitrines which are so important to the safety of enameled work. The gallery would always have an exhibit on view, whether it be historical or contemporary, juried or an invitational. The gallery might not at first be included in the Center plan but instead be partnered with an established gallery in the local area. The opportunity to establish a museum either in conjunction with or in addition to the gallery is a possibility down the road. A museum would have the ability to receive donations of work that could be included in a permanent collection. In the meantime a gallery could have dedicated space to show work from several permanent collections including those of The Enamel Arts Foundation and The Woodrow Carpenter Foundation.

The Richmond Art Center could become a strategic partner with the Center to exhibit enamel until a permanent gallery could be established. Other gallery spaces in the Bay Area are also likely partners for exhibitions.

3. Studio Rental Space

Renting out studio space can provide funds for the operating of the Center once it is established. Studio renters can also be staff members who could provide security and maintenance to the facility. They could participate in events such as studio tours and serve as a draw for the general public to visit the Center. The Torpedo Factory model on the east coast is a good example of how studio rentals can complement the total mission of the project

4. Research

There are 2 types of research that can be done in a facility such as an enamel center: library research and technical research.

There is no enamel research library that is currently accessible to the public. It is essential that books, catalogues, monographs, newsletters, individual paper, misc. historical documents, and images be stored, archived and loaned out for enamel history research. The Center would have a research library and a part time librarian in charge of the library.

The Northern California Enamel Guild library is searching for a place to reside and is a good fit for the beginnings of a research library. It is a hope that among the in-kind donations received by the Center, that there be individual and organizational donations that help make the library a place that academics will use to expand what we know about enamel history and make that knowledge available to others both inside and outside of academia.

In order for a research library to thrive in the present digital age, holdings need to be available in digital format. One of the first missions of an enamel research library would be to digitalize all holdings. The Carpenter Foundation in KY and the Enamel Arts Foundation have large collections and could be strategic partners in making research materials available to educators, academics, art historians, and the general public in digital format.

The Center could eventually fund technical research projects that examine the technical and safety properties of the enamels, tools, and equipment that are currently being used. Enamel science can expand beyond the boundaries of glass technology and ceramic engineering if scientists and interested parties have a place to do research. The Center would also be a place that encourages experimentation with the medium. Technical research projects could be a very good fit for partnerships with industry.

5. Industrial/Large-Scale Enameling for Artists

Large Scale or Industrial Enameling for artists and small volume production entrepreneurs could make the Center an international draw. In Europe and Eastern Europe, where some governments financially support large scale enameling workshops, a community of enamel painters has emerged and been widely recognized. There is no reason why this can't happen in the U.S.

A space dedicated to large-scale enameling at the Center would have 2 large furnaces: a standard "hanging" furnace that could accommodate flat and flanged pieces and some 3-D works; an "elevator" furnace that drops down from the ceiling and fires work in place. This type of furnace is suitable for larger sculptural work.

Dave Berfield in Bainbridge Island, WA, has promised the donation of his furnace to the Center if it can be moved in the next 2 years. The moving of his furnace plus the necessary refurbishing to make it suitable for a classroom situation will need to be budgeted for a later date. If this furnace becomes unavailable then funds will need to be raised to build or commission another furnace for the large scale area.

Classes and workshops could be taught in this space and it could also be rented out in whole or in part for artists wanting to produce commissions or small quantity production work in enameled steel. The technical staff member for this part of the Center would be someone knowledgeable about industrial practices.

Meanwhile, partnerships with the enamel industry, and especially KVO in Santa Rosa, CA. Will be invaluable to the growth of the Center.

6. Supplies

There may be no actual bricks and mortar stores that sell ONLY enamel supplies, tools and equipment in the U. S. Such supplies are somewhat available by mail order, online purchase, or phone call but walk-in business has been limited to those storefronts that sell primarily metalworking, ceramic, or glass supplies.

The Center would sell supplies to students taking classes and/or who live in the vicinity of the center. It would also have an online sales capability. The supply store could start as a strategic partnership with someone who is currently selling supplies to the enameling community who would be willing to "stock" the store, receive the profits from the sale of goods as well as maintain a web business for supplies. The partner might pay for space rental at the Center or for hiring of staff to run the store. Eventually the store could be a self-supporting part of the center providing there are no legal hindrances to the Center's non-profit status .

7. Marketing Opportunities

The Center could have a small gift/gallery shop and receive commissions from the sale of work. The gift shop offers enamelists the chance to market their work to the public.

The Center could also serve as a hub for open studios in the area both through its studio renters and from others coming in to present work.

The Center could host sales events such as trunk shows in conjunction with specific exhibitions or showcases for emerging artists.

Online marketing of pieces for sale in an exhibition is a must.

8. Meeting and Networking

The Center could be a place to hold conferences and meetings especially if the center is located in the Bay Area, which is a natural tourist destination. It would have the necessary A-V and digital equipment on hand for dynamic presentations. It would eventually have meeting rooms and an auditorium.

Almost immediately the Center could serve as a meeting hub for the Northern California Enamel Guild and other similar local organizations.

9. Lodging and Dining

It would be convenient to house and feed students in one place with the Center being set in a campus-like environment. This is a dream for the far future. In reality and in the near future, the Center should be located near or accessible to affordable lodging and restaurants. Its location should also include plentiful parking and be safe for pedestrian traffic.

10. Job Opportunities

- a) Teaching
There are many more students graduating today with MFA's that focus on enameling due to the fact that several universities have become enamel hubs. Unfortunately, these new graduates have very few college teaching or adult education teaching opportunities open to them and the marketplace right now is extremely competitive. The Center could provide an incubator for these nascent enamel educators to hone their teaching skills, develop workshops (which they can take on the road) and gain a reputation that could lead to academic jobs elsewhere.
- b) Full-time and part-time staff would be paid decent wages and with benefits.
- c) Volunteers would gain experience and skills working in a vibrant non-profit arts organization.
- d) The large scale facility could help public artists gain commissions.
- e) Studio renters would have opportunities to sell their work at the Center.

What Would be Needed to Make Such a Center Happen

1. Money and in-Kind Donations

- a) 'angel' donors who see the value of such a Center and are willing to put in significant start-up capital - \$10,000+ as well as ongoing pledges toward the yearly expenses of running the Center. Charitable gift annuities would also be sought.
- b) Yearly memberships with commensurate perks depending on the membership category. Memberships before an actual space is acquired could provide perks such as reduced fees on classes/workshops, free admission to symposia and lectures, which would be sponsored or co-sponsored by the Center
- c) Grants for specific aspects of the Center such as youth programming, exhibitions, research, etc.
- d) Class and workshop fees. These should be in keeping with similar fees from similar educational institutions
- e) Rental fees from renting space at the Center either for private studio rentals, large scale facility rentals, or facility rentals to outside sources

- f) Commissions from the gallery and gift shop sales
- g) Donations of library materials, tools, equipment and supplies by businesses and industry
- h) Donations of library materials, tools, equipment, and supplies by individuals. These could, within legal constraints, be resold to raise money for the Center if the Center is not able to use the donations directly
- i) Donations of volunteer labor to build out and maintain the physical space, to staff the Center, to help with operations such as fundraising and PR
- j) Crowd-source funding for specific projects, particularly pertaining to start-up funding
- k) Fund-raising events such as auctions, theme-based dinners and programs, and other similar events

2. A Physical Space

- a) In or near an urban area in order to form strategic partnerships with nearby organizations and businesses
- b) Easily accessible by plane and train
- c) Easily accessible by public transit
- d) Ample parking
- e) Safe to walk
- f) Lots of natural light
- g) Capable of expanding in use, either by adding buildings, or expanding into more square footage
- h) Affordable for development

3. A Cohesive Long Term Plan

So many organizations falter and sometimes fail for lack of a long term reasonable plan. The plan and organizational structure needs to be broad enough to take into account all possible variables that will allow funding and flexibility enough to allow change.

4. A Group of Dedicated Planners

The Center cannot be dependent on the ideas and energy of one person. The plan is only as good as the sum of its parts. AN advisory group is a necessary first start.

5. Fundraising and a Sound Budget

The Center could use the promise of some large donors now but it can begin raising small amounts of money soon. It could take several million dollars to get this project off the ground in the magnitude described above but, if the funds are less, the Center will begin at the level it can afford and still be pertinent.

The Resources Available to Create and Maintain the Center

A separate resource list has been created for contacts that have been approached and have yet to be approached. The contacts are friends, colleagues, curators, collectors, administrators of arts organizations, grant administrators, educators, industry spokespeople, and government representatives. The contacts have recommended other contacts and other resources which will be followed up.

Proposed Timeline - 2013 and 2015

In reality, the timeline is tight and will need to be revised by the end of 2013. I am prepared to give the Center project 5 years of my life which means it needs to have a viable future by 2018. I believe it can. After 2018 I intend to take a back seat to all of the people who are going to continue to put time, energy, and resources into making this project a success well into the future.

January to June 2013

Assess Resources.

Find intern(s) that can establish a website, work with social media, and aid in research.

Establish an organizational structure .

Create a non-profit umbrella with which to receive donations or become a 501(c)3.

Create a start-up Budget for the next 2 years.

Get the word out!

June to December 2013

Begin active fundraising.

Assess potential sites.

Continue planning.

Create an advisory committee

Plan for specific programs in 2014

By the end of 2013

The structure and plan should be in place.

A board and executive director should be in place.

Potential sites will have been looked at and evaluated.

Start-up funds will be raised.

A web presence, social media presence, an a marketing strategy for 2014 will be determined

2014

Fundraising will continue.

If site development has been delayed because of lack of funds then the Center will operate and function in partnerships with other organizations to sponsor events, classes/workshops, symposia, exhibitions, and the establishment of a research arm.

By the end of 2014 a site will hopefully have been chosen and build out and development begun or hopefully completed.

2015

Fundraising will continue.

The Center will officially open.

Sponsored programs will also continue