Proposal for 'Crossing Borders: Portraits from the Casasola Studio in El Paso, Texas' Ellis Island Museum Exhibit

Anne M Giangiulio, University of Texas at El Paso

Available at: https://works.bepress.com/anne_giangiulio/7/
May 18, 2009

Re: Invoice for layout and exhibit design of Crossing The Border: Immigration Portraits from the Casasola Studio, El Paso, Texas

To the Committee:

This invoice in the amount of xxx, is for design services to be rendered for the layout design and overseeing of construction and installation of the exhibit Crossing The Border: Immigration Portraits from the Casasola Studio, El Paso, Texas (working title), which is to be held in Ellis Island’s third floor Dormitory Gallery in the summer of 2010.

Attached to this invoice is my preliminary plan for the layout of the six gallery rooms in which the exhibit will be displayed. The source visuals needed for the exhibit (photos, newspaper clippings, maps, graphs, text, etc.) have not been specifically determined at this time and are not included in this invoice. The materials required to create the exhibit (foamcore or plastic panels, frames, display cases, vinyl adhesives, etc.) are also not included in this xxx invoice and have not been exactly determined at this time.

I look forward to working with you and your staff.

Sincerely,

Anne M. Giangiulio
PLAN A. 22, 4' x 8' panels?
If 4' x 8' panels were in place only Where the walker system is installed.

PLAN B. 48, 4' x 8' panels?
If 4' x 8' freestanding panels did not use the Walker System. These panels would require adjustable feet and be sized/weighted properly so that they will not tip over or be easily moved by visitors and/or cleaning staff. The facility recommends that they have floor brakes with adjustable feet so that the exhibit components do not move. These panels could be placed regardless and in front of windows and radiators. This proposal allows for more panels.

PLAN C. 40, 4' x 8' panels?
Again, 4' x 8' freestanding panels that do not use the Walker System. These could be double-sided and placed in the center of each gallery. Visitors would walk around the central displays in each room. Media kiosks would still be off in corners (where outlets are located) in non-sequential galleries. Special select panels would face visitors at the two possible entrances to the exhibit: Gallery 1 (East Entrance), and Gallery 5.
Possible image for an easel on the entry level floor, using early Casasola framing device as a motif throughout the exhibit, plus 1920s-1940s-inspired typefaces.
Example of easel image and inside panel at East entrance of Gallery 1.
Alfonso Casasola’s studio occupied a downtown building in the 500 block of S. El Paso Street; a stone’s throw from the International Bridge and right next door to the Colon Theater. Citizens of Juarez, El Pasoans, soldiers from Fort Bliss, visiting Mexican entertainers and even Border Patrol agents wanting a photo to send back home to Wisconsin or New Hampshire, dropped into Alfonso’s studio to have “the moments of their lives” recorded for posterity.

And so it went for decades. The pleasant, smock-wearing photographer sharing the simple joys and triumphs of people who wanted to be seen in their wedding best, their graduation robes, or (for soldiers) hard-won chevrons.

After Alfonso’s in 1946, Miguel’s wife, Emma Flores, kept the studio operating until the doors finally closed in 1992. Snapshots and cheap cameras were muscling their way to the front of the line, pushing aside the maestro and his camera. Times had changed forever, but seventy-one years remains a remarkable run for a family business.
Gallery 1: Introduction
First panel seen on entry to Gallery 1

Needed:
• Images of deteriorated negatives
• Photos showing different backdrops
• Panel explaining differences between Ellis Island immigration and immigration on Mexican border; use small passport photos including pictures of Asians, Europeans, Braceros backdrops
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Needed:

- Panel about identification project: example of what items look like in newspaper
- Roberto Urrea family: first photo published in El Paso Times (in June 2002) was identified the next day
- Images of newspaper articles: Ramon Renteria wrote article about photo collection, 2002, El Paso Times and El Diario de Juarez began publishing unidentified photos each week in September 2002
- Examples of early pictures identified: Willie Apodaca and her dress, Mary Salem Morad, etc.
- Use photos showing a variety of ethnic groups, including African-Americans
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Gallery 4: Children and individuals—not necessarily identified, but compelling images that hint at ethnic heritage, show important events that were documented by formal photos.

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Gallery 5: Performers and athletes
(Movie stars, Musicians, Dancers, Boxers, Wrestlers/strong men (See if posters from Labor Advocate use Casasola images?))

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Gallery 6: Events
Pictures from events and places outside the Casasola Studio: Store openings, dances, charity events, etc.
• Examples of photos from later Casasola accession? Quinceaneras? Weddings?
• Graduations?
• Closing panels: Update to current situation?

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