

**A. What activities would the grant support?**

This request is respectfully submitted to support ongoing preservation and collections care efforts at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum (Museum). Specifically, funds from NEH will be used to purchase three (3) hermetically-sealed, museum-quality cabinets, as well as supplies to properly clean and house objects in our high-polish metal trophy collection. The rehousing and storage of this collection is an important part of a greater effort that includes updates to our collections management database, and the creation of a new housekeeping plan and handling guide specifically for our trophy collection.

This project is informed by recommendations from a July 2018 Conservation Center for Art and Historic Artifacts (CCAHA) preservation assessment and a metals case study report from an NEH Preventive Conservation Fellow (See attachments). We propose the following preservation and preventative conservation interventions: 1) Rehousing high-polish trophies together, away from more acidic objects; 2) Deliberately creating controlled microenvironments using closed cabinets and fabricated toppers to protect trophies from pollutants and high relative humidity that lead to tarnishing and pitting; 3) Properly storing trophies off the ground, while avoiding overhead shelves that pose a risk to trophies and staff; and 4) Better monitoring of environments where collections are stored.

**B. What are the content and size of the humanities collection that are the focus of the project?**

As defined by our newly-adopted Scope of Collection, we collect and exhibit objects concerning the international sport of auto racing with a focus on championship open wheel racing, races held at the Indianapolis Motor Speedway (IMS), and individuals who have a connection to IMS to help tell stories of automobile racing, design, promotion, financing and development. Our large object collection consists of automobiles, stand-alone engines, and automotive parts. The archival collection encompasses varied documents including car data and blueprints; race entry, timing and scoring records; film, DVDs and videos; paper memorabilia such as race programs, scrapbooks, tickets, and press kits; thousands of photographs, negatives, and slides; and technical drawings and car graphic designs. We also care for hundreds of paintings, historic posters and prints; trophies and awards; and racing suits, helmets, and goggles.

Our trophy collection is the focus of this project. We have approximately 391 trophies spanning more than a century of motor racing in America and Europe. They represent the road races, dirt track races, oval and road courses, endurance races, hill climbs, motorcycle races, and mechanical and driver achievements that have helped define not only racing but the evolution of the automotive industry. The oldest trophy in our collection dates from 1903, just ten years after the production of the first “horseless carriage” in America; the latest addition is from 2017. We have prioritized our 203 high-polish silver trophies, followed by those made of a variety of materials including silver with wood bases or elements (18); bronze, with and without wood bases or elements (19); mixed metals with wood bases (92); mixed metals with plastic bases (14); and metals with other materials such as glass, ceramics, or marble (45).

Each trophy is unique with its own story. A few important examples from the collection include:

**The Caracciola Collection:** The 176 trophies (99 of which are or contain silver) from Rudolf Caracciola are the “crown jewels” of the collection. Caracciola, a German driver and winner of multiple European Championships, was a longtime friend of IMS owner Tony Hulman, who purchased the collection following Mrs. Caracciola’s death. It includes the Adolf Hitler Trophy presented to Caracciola at the 1937 Grand Prix of Germany for Automobiles. Featuring a swastika and eagle, it was the first trophy given by

Hitler for a sport event. In addition to trophies, the collection also includes 122 awards (42 silver); 15 bowls (14 silver); 66 pins, brooches or badges; 9 plaques (6 silver); and 5 silver drinkware sets.

**The Wheeler-Schebler Trophy:** Commissioned by IMS co-founder Frank Wheeler and George Schebler, this seven-foot, sterling silver pre-Indianapolis 500 trophy designed by the Tiffany Company was awarded in 1909 and 1910. The Wheeler-Schebler Carburetor Co. later became Marvel-Schebler, one of the founding companies of the Borg-Warner Corporation, which sponsors the trophy awarded to Indianapolis 500 winners since 1936.

**L. Strauss & Co. Trophies:** Leopold Strauss, an Indianapolis clothier, awarded trophies to Indianapolis 500 winners from 1919 to 1935. Featuring a different work of art each year—from a woman running behind leashed dogs to a soaring eagle—these trophies were commissioned or imported from Europe and always featured speed as a theme. Trophies from the nineteen-teens and twenties are rare; with 14 in our collection, the museum’s sample is a significant representation.

**The Monza “Race of Two Worlds” Trophy:** The 500 Miglia Di Monza was held in Monza, Italy in 1957 and 1958 to bring United States and European drivers together. Called “Monzanapolis” or The Race of Two Worlds, it was designed to be a contest between ten of the best of the Old World against ten of the best from the New World.

### **C. How are these humanities collections used?**

Our trophies exemplify the birth of the automobile industry and the rise of open wheel racing. They represent the human need for competition and our natural pull towards innovation—and the notoriety, glory, and satisfaction that come with these inclinations. Beyond being awards for speed and endurance, these trophies are cultural and artistic symbols of the times. They reflect worldwide social and political events, signify geographical locations, and represent stories of competition and collaboration that are inherent to racing. Whether they are iconic and recognizable, or their significance is more nuanced, each provides a tangible (and often beautiful) representation of the human aspects of auto racing.

Trophies are important to our current exhibit process. They have a worldwide interest and are often a draw for visitors interested in the social and historical aspects of racing. They are rotated through our permanent exhibit, *Winning Cars of the Indianapolis 500*, and featured in our temporary exhibits. Frequently, we pair trophies with cars from our collection, such as the winning 1957 and 1958 Monza cars with the Race of Two Worlds trophy described above. In recent temporary exhibits, trophies from our collection and on loan from private individuals allowed visitors to learn about awards not generally accessible to the public. While we are diligent about rotating trophies through our smaller display cases and frequently feature them in our “From the Vault” posts on social media, by and large they have mostly served as supplements in larger vehicle-focused exhibits. As we gain better physical and intellectual control of the trophy collection and transition from creating displays to providing more interpretation in our exhibits, we will better utilize the trophies. We have explored several potential interpretive themes and associated exhibits and programming, as follows.

**Motivation** - Ideas include: examining the evolution of racing’s focus from demonstrating the power and performance of the cars, with trophies representing “bragging rights” when displayed in showrooms, to the modern post-WWII focus on drivers, teams, and sponsors; consideration of how racing awards and recognition has changed over the years, from trophies and prize money to media notoriety and celebrity status; or capitalizing on “participation trophy” discussions to help students draw parallels between

participation and victory, competitive motivation, and recognition with lesson plans focused on working hard, setting goals, and teamwork.

**Design** - Ideas include: looking at trophy designers and their inspiration and creative processes with activities encouraging visitors to design their own trophies; examining the use of symbolism on trophies with an art historian or other experts to help us better understand our collection and provide public programming on the topic; or comparing trophies (specifically their design and the materials used) by decade, race series, or host location.

**Promotion** - Ideas include: examining how early individual and corporate sponsorship of races, trophies, and prizes influenced participation and caused the sport to evolve; or considering the use of trophies and other race awards as marketing and advertising pieces for sponsors, which could translate into lesson plans and conversation topics for high school and college marketing classes.

**Accessibility** - Ideas include: further developing partnerships by making trophies available for loan to other institutions (such as the Indianapolis Museum of Art or the Indiana Historical Society); helping audiences better connect to the collection through related workshops such as caring for silver at home; or better accommodating researchers studying the decorative and historical value of the awards as well as those interested in studying the materials from a conservation perspective.

#### **D. What is the nature and mission of your institution?**

The Indianapolis Motor Speedway is one of the oldest and most revered motorsport facilities in the world. Constructed in 1909, it was included on the National Register of Historic Places in 1975 and was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1987. The Indianapolis Motor Speedway Foundation, Inc. (Foundation), is a non-profit organized in 1957 to operate the Indianapolis Motor Speedway Museum, which opened in 1956. In 2006, the Foundation converted from a private foundation to a publicly supported charity. We operate on the grounds of the Indianapolis Motor Speedway through a collaborative relationship with IMS memorialized in a shared services agreement and a lease. The Foundation's mission is to celebrate more than a century of the innovation, thrill, and adventure of motor racing at the Speedway, guided by our vision that motor racing will be a revered aspect of our American heritage and a valued part of family culture for generations to come.

We are open to the public 363 days a year; in 2018 we welcomed more than 140,000 visitors. Recently, our museum was identified as the third best sports attraction in the country (USA Today, 10best.com) and is listed on TripAdvisor's 10 Best Things to Do in Indianapolis with an average rating of 4.5 stars. Uniquely situated inside the historical 2.5-mile oval track, our museum houses 37,500 square feet of exhibit space, a non-public library, extensive archive materials, and an impressive collection of small and large objects spanning more than 100 years of motor racing history.

#### **E. Has your institution ever had a preservation or conservation assessment or consultation?**

A cursory collections care assessment was conducted in early 2017 by Ramona Duncan Huse, Senior Director of Conservation, from the Indiana Historical Society as a professional courtesy. At that time, no one on the Museum's staff was professionally trained in museum studies. Ms. Huse's report helped staff identify their most pressing priorities and focus their initial preservation efforts.

As we have grown and professionalized our staff, we have added a curator of vehicles, curator of media and historical archives, and a museum studies-trained collections manager. In the spring of 2018, we

applied for and received a CCAHA Preservation Assessment Grant. In addition to the onsite evaluation and report from the CCAHA preservation specialist, the Museum was also selected as the case study host site for CCAHA's NEH Preventative Conservation Fellow who was particularly interested in studying how pollutants were affecting the high-polish metal trophies in our collection. Although her efforts specifically focused on the trophies, she suggests that her recommendations may also be adapted to our wider collection of paper, photographs, plastics, leather, textiles, and artists' colorants.

#### **F. What is the importance of this project to your institution?**

This project is part of a larger effort to implement collections care best practices, maximize space efficiency, improve interpretation, and expand programming to prolong the useful life of our collection while increasing public access to it. Trophies are currently stored on open shelves and on the floor in one of two fireproof vaults or in the collections processing room of our basement storage space. Collections staff have noted pitting and tarnishing that is likely expedited by high relative humidity and pollutants in the environment exacerbated by sharing storage space with hundreds of vehicles, as well as our museum's location in the middle of an active race track.

We are working towards a major building renovation that will allow for more collections processing and storage space. It will also include an overhaul of building systems, including the 40+ year old heating and cooling systems, to better control temperature and relative humidity. In the meantime, we are implementing best practices to stabilize our collection in place for the next five to seven years, and possibly in off-site storage during construction of the renovated building. For this reason, we are integrating transferable upgrades to our current space. We are replacing cardboard boxes with archival-safe storage containers and working to change out wood shelving with closed powder-coated steel shelving more suitable for preservation. Our mixed-metal trophies will be stored on this shelving or fitted with custom toppers and stored on open shelves, to allow for any natural offgassing. Silver pieces in the collection will be stored in the museum cabinets that are the focus of this request for funding.

Once successfully completed, we expect to realize the following outcomes:

1. Proper storage through closely controlled and monitored microenvironments will buffer against fluctuations in ambient temperature and relative humidity and will provide protection against physical damage and airborne pollutants (dust, water vapor, volatile acetic acid, hydrogen sulfide, sulfur dioxide). Discontinuation of overhead storage will offer a safer environment for staff retrieving trophies (See Metals Report p. 13-15).
2. Proper housing and cleaning will help prevent tarnishing and pitting of metals, increasing the sustainability of the collection (See Metals Report p. 15).
3. A housekeeping plan and handling guide will establish consistent and correct procedures for all staff to follow to reduce risks of physical damage to trophies through proper use of gloves and approved cleaning methods (See Metals Report p. 16).
4. Updated information in PastPerfect will help curatorial and collections staff in exhibit development and locating items.

#### **F. What are the names and qualifications of the consultants and staff involved in the project?**

Roxine Dunbar, Collections Manager for the museum, will serve as the project director. Roxie joined the staff in 2017 as a collections and registration intern from the Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) Museum Studies program. Upon successful completion of her Master of Arts in Museum Studies, she was hired as the Museum's first full-time professional collections manager. Roxie has also worked on collections projects at The Children's Museum of Indianapolis, the Center for Digital Scholarship at IUPUI, and the Masonic Museum and Library of Indiana. She will oversee the work of

IUPUI collections interns, who will assist with the project under her supervision and guidance (see internship description in Appendices).

Samantha Forsko, CCAHA Preservation Specialist, served as our preservation assessment consultant. Samantha is the Vice Chair of the American Association for State and Local History's Field Services Alliance and Co-Chair of the Philadelphia Area Conservation Association. She serves on the Board of the Association of Registrars and Collections Specialists and is the Chair of Alliance for Response Philadelphia. Samantha received her MA in Arts Management with a focus on Archival and Museum Studies from Claremont Graduate University and her BA in Art History with minors in Studio Art and Chemistry from Willamette University.

Our metals evaluation and report were completed by Lisa Imamura. She is an objects conservator and graduate of the Queen's University Master of Art Conservation Program. Lisa held internships at the Royal BC Museum and the Department of Archaeology at Memorial University of Newfoundland and Labrador. After graduating, Lisa worked at the Alaska State Museum before becoming the 2017-2018 National Endowment for the Humanities Preventive Conservation Fellow at the Conservation Center for Art & Historic Artifacts.

**G. What is the work plan for this project?**

Collections care recommendations for the metal trophy collection address the following risks: temperature and relative humidity; pollutants; polishing; handling; and housekeeping.

Sept. 2019 – Museum cabinets, b-flute corrugated board sheets, silica gel and datalogger will be ordered. Trophies will be moved to lower shelves that have been cleared because of rehousing/deaccessioning already in process. Temporary holding space will be made available in collections processing room for trophies to be cleaned and fitted for custom-made b-flute topper.

Oct. 2019 - Estimated delivery of the b-flute corrugated board sheets, silica gel and datalogger. Installation of datalogger in vault (regular monitoring will be ongoing). Begin placing mixed-metal trophies in closed shelving with silica gel/sorbs (ongoing through May 2020). Construction will begin for the toppers for the mixed-media trophies being placed on open shelving (ongoing through May 2020). Before rehousing, each trophy will be dusted/cleaned and polished if needed, photographed, and updated in PastPerfect with photo, condition report, treatment report, and new location.

Nov. 2019 – Estimated delivery and installation of museum cabinets. Begin placing Caracciola Collection and other silver trophies in cabinets with sorbs and silver strips after being dusted/cleaned and polished if needed, photographed, and updated in PastPerfect with photo, condition report, treatment report, and new location.

Dec. 2019 - May 2020 - Continue placing Caracciola Collection and other silver trophies in cabinets. Continue rehousing trophies that will be placed on open shelves.

June 2020 – Review final collections report from PastPerfect. Draft new housekeeping and handling guidelines for staff and volunteers.

July 2020 – Conduct staff in-service training to review guidelines and demonstrate techniques.