

THE HARRY BRORBY PROJECT: DIGITIZATION AND TECHNOLOGIES

PRESENTERS: Austin Garcia, Brant Biba, Amy Van Dommelen

DEPARTMENT: Art History, Hope College

MENTOR: Dr. Heidi Kraus

CLASS: Amanda Bennick, Brant Biba, Rachael Corey, Monica Dwyer, Austin Garcia, Stephanie Harron, Mason Hunt, Nancy Laning, Erin Schregardus, Amy Van Dommelen, Sai Wang



INTRODUCTION:

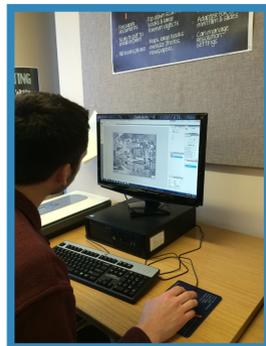
A major component of the Harry Brorby Project has been the digitization of photos, correspondence, exhibition pamphlets, sketches, artwork, among other things garnered from a collection of old beer boxes. The importance of our methodologies has been crucial to the organization and representation of archived items, especially given the the allotted time the course affords. Time restraints have been prevalent in making the selection process. This is especially true in our case, since our course has issued the completion of individual projects. This has included a research paper analyzing the compilation of our findings and digital portfolios presenting our research in a more visually and modern manner. Students have digitized based on what their topic entails, adhering to course rubric as well as to a responsibility to objectively represent Brorby's life. We hope that this process will lead to further students interested in the life and work of Harry Brorby.

METHODOLOGIES:

At the beginning of our project, our methodological efforts in digitization stemmed from an anti-subjective approach. We initially attempted to scan everything available from the Brorby Collection in order to present a digital collection void of any bias aside from how the content was visually organized. We realized in time that attempting to digitize the entirety of the collection within the timeframe was near impossible. From there our methodology changed to a positivist, historically-objective view, that is, we wanted to digitize items that would give the viewer a historical perspective of Harry Brorby's life and also create a newfound legacy for him both as a painter and a member of the Western Michigan community.

PROCESSES:

- Scanning photos using book scanner available at Van Wylen Library
- Improving the state of photos using programs such as Photoshop
- Storing information using Zotero (in progress), Google Drive, and Weebly
- Digitizing photos using professional DSLR cameras
- Organize and store files onto external hard drives



CONCLUSION:

Though we have only scratched the surface digitizing the Harry Brorby Collection, we seek to provide a framework for future students to expand upon. Throughout this process we have learned to utilize various digitization methods, processes to enhance aged photos through Photoshop, researched available locations for storing metadata such as the program Zotero, and integrated content onto a website platform. We learned that with simple tasks like scanning documents and photographs, we undertake the responsibility of post-mortem reputation management. Our subjective editing and digitization decisions play a crucial role in the projection of Harry Brorby's status and legacy. Currently our collective efforts reside in digital storage devices to be added in a final digital portfolio of the Harry Brorby collection.

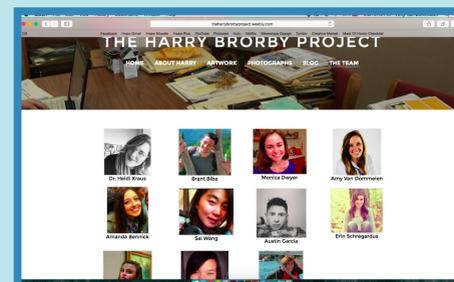
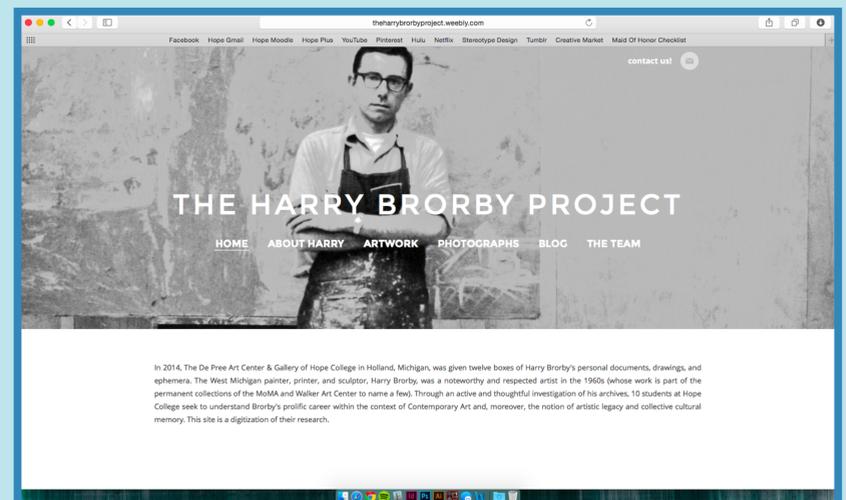
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS:

We would like to thank the Techlab for making available the necessary digitization tools, and providing us with additional assistance regarding the photo editing process. Also a big thanks to Alex Galarza for giving us resources for website creation and metadata storage. Finally we would like to thank Steve Nelson for providing us with a projector and carousel to digitize 35mm slides.

ABSTRACT

In 2014, sixteen boxes of artist Harry Brorby's personal documents, drawings, photographs, and ephemera were donated to The De Pree Gallery. A respected West Michigan-based painter, printmaker, and sculptor in the 1960s and 70s (whose work is part of the permanent collections of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City and Walker Art Center in Minneapolis to name a few), this project seeks to understand Brorby's prolific career within the context of Contemporary Art and, moreover, the notion of artistic legacy and collective cultural memory. To this end, students have been divided into five project teams, each focusing on a specific aspect of the archives and its preservation: website creation and content management (Amy Van Dommelen, project manager), organization of archival material (Stephanie Harron, project manager), digitization of archival material (Brant Biba, project manager), contact management and historical reconstruction (Nancy Laning, project manager), and provenance reconstruction (Erin Schregardus, project manager). In addition to this group component, each student is concentrating on a specific aspect of Brorby's archives that peaks their curiosity—something they would like to personally explore further. Individual research papers and on-line digital portfolios will serve as measurable outcomes for the course.

THEHARRYBRORBYPROJECT.WEBBLY.COM



The Harry Brorby website will soon house the research and work the class has done. There will be online galleries to display the different works and series that Brorby created, digital scans of Brorby's photographs, and a summarization of who Harry was. Along with Harry's digitized archives, the site will display weeks of blogs written by the class, as well as the homepages to the teams' individual digital portfolios from the semester-long research project.

