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East Bay RI

Bristol
Phoenix

Getting a large work of public art to the foundry is no small undertaking



STEPHAN BRIGIDI

Artist Spencer Evans with the models for his Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker memorial, shortly before the sculptures were transferred from his Pawtucket studio to the foundry.

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By Christy Nadalin

The development of the Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker memorial, a substantial artwork featuring a Pokanoket woman, an African man, and their child, has taken about 9 months from tabletop model to full-size and castable.

And once it was done, things got a little....tricky.

“A lot goes into safe, secure transport,” said Stephan Brigidi, chairman of the Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker memorial design committee. “There were three visits, extensive visits, to artist Spencer Evans’ studio, as well as a visit to the Independence Park site,” he said of Buccacio Sculpture Services, a highly-regarded foundry, and its president Jeff Buccacio. According to Brigidi, Buccacio even advised Evans on ways to reinforce the models (which are made of wax and surprisingly light) so they are not damaged during transport.

Evans had the foresight to build his models on wheeled platforms, so that was helpful when it came time to move them. But the forms — and especially the limbs — were going to be vulnerable during transport. The solution? Remove them, carefully, scoring the wax so they can be perfectly realigned before the figures are cast in bronze.

Donations welcome

The final price for fabrication increased significantly over earlier estimates, mainly due to the fact that the garments created by the artist in the sculpture's final form are more intricate than in the original concept model. It's not just a matter of materials — the additional details require the construction of additional forms.

“When we saw the incredible artistry of Spencer we could never say ‘oh, make it plainer. Make it more simple’,” said Brigidi. “It had to be exactly from the hands of the artist, which makes us all determined to raise the additional funds however we can.”

Brigidi noted that Buccacio Sculpture Services was donating \$10,000 to the cause, and Pare Engineering, which does infrastructure work throughout Bristol, will be prepping the site pro bono.

The plan is to dedicate the sculpture with a community event and ceremony, to be held on August 23, the International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade and its Abolition.

“This this is step number one, our primary goal to get this installation done,” said Brigidi. “We want to reach our fundraising goals so we can install as planned on this important holiday, but we are not going to disband and go home — we are going to move forward with educational programming to really amplify the meaning of this.”

Interested in donating? Mail the Bristol Middle Passage Project at PO Box 871, Bristol, or visit www.BMPPMP.org.

Keywords

Bristol Middle Passage Port Marker memorial, Spencer Evans, Buccacio Sculpture Services
