

PROJECT SPOTLIGHT



Bo Bartlett Center

A Modernist Take on the Art of High-Density Art Storage

CHALLENGE

Located on the banks of the Chattahoochee River in Columbus, Georgia, the Bo Bartlett Center is part of Columbus State University's College of the Arts. Built to both celebrate the work of realist painter and Columbus native Bo Bartlett and to foster an appreciation of art in general, the 18,000-plus square foot space is inside a renovated cotton mill originally built in the 1960s.

Executive Director David Houston envisioned the Center as a place that would host a number of traveling exhibitions. While only eight Bo Bartlett paintings would call the center home permanently, the work of many other creators would cycle through over the years. Given this expectation, the Center's relatively small 518 square foot art storage room was long, narrow (14' x 37') and not ideally conducive to housing large volumes of work.

SOLUTION

Although not artists themselves, Houston and Patterson Pope Sales Representative Dick Beery do have an eye for detail. After the two met and familiarized themselves with each other's expertise, a fuller understanding of what the storage expectations were came into view. Houston communicated his vision for the space, while Beery relied on his experience to add a dash of innovative thinking. Together, they added more than a few strokes of outside-the-lines creativity.

While the art storage room at the Center was small, it was also tall. The ceilings measured 23' high, to be exact. This was noticeable as an advantage during the gallery's initial days, when

many of Bartlett's paintings were on display. That's because the realist, modernist painter works on a grand scale, with many of his works measuring as much as 16' high. Houston knew that at some point, those large paintings would have to be stored away from the public. Taking full advantage of the room's height was a creative solution.

"We added a pair of 37' x 16' hanging wall racks on two of the structural walls inside the space," said Beery. "We also installed a manual assist high-density storage unit to the room that featured a 60' aisle and four moveable carriages, each measuring 20' x 10'. The combination allows for the storage of a sizeable collection of artwork."



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David Houston
Executive Director
Bo Bartlett Center

ACHIEVEMENT

The Center was designed by noted Seattle architect Tom Kundig, well known for his work with kinetics. The space features large, moveable walls that allow for simple space “re-purposing.” Gallery spaces can easily become classrooms or meeting areas.

“Dick and I worked together on this for months, and we eventually settled on a very innovative solution,” said Houston. “By using the vertical space, putting 16’ racks up the walls as well as central space-saving racks, we’ve created a storage area that works for us today and offers potential for additions down the road.”

The new storage area is able to accommodate works of a variety of sizes, large and small.

“From the very first truck that came in, we started hanging things at the very top of the space on that large external wall. As we rotate different artists’ work in and out of the gallery, that space will also be used for changing exhibitions. When the art movers come, we will keep two of the racks clear so there’s always room to keep that art hung and protected until we’re able to install it in the gallery.”

His advice to others contemplating a large renovation is direct.

“When you think about storage, as with anything else, you really need to think about your mission, your operations, and your needs at the beginning and get a professional’s opinion. You don’t want to get to the end and then wish you had planned differently. Patterson Pope made it easy. And it works.”

