



Off Site Storage: Build or Rent

This session presented by **Vicki Gambill**, director of collections management at The Broad; **Tom Krueger**, assistant manager art preparation and handling at the Museum of Modern Art; and **Ashley Dodd**, senior associate registrar/collections manager at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art. Each speaker spoke of the pros and cons that their institutions deal with within their current storage. These pros and cons involve cost, staffing, and the constant struggle for storage space.

Vicki Gambill has a unique challenge with The Broad's collection due to the massive scale of many of the works. Her first slide was of Robert Therrien's *Under the Table*, which puts into perspective the issue of storage that The Broad contends with since many other works Vicki spoke about were also quite large. Because of the size of the objects in their collection, it was not possible to store everything on-site; instead, they have to rent space to accommodate their works of significant scale.

Tom Krueger also spoke about renting space to accommodate the vast collection at the MoMA. I found the attention given to ideas of sustainability, not just in this session but throughout the ARCS conference, very enlightening. This subject was covered briefly by Tom regarding the distance and efficiency of moving works between the museum and the storage facility. The distance from the museum is minimal; I believe Tom said it took roughly twenty-five minutes to get from the museum to storage. I was also very much impressed by the way MoMA tracks the works that need to go from the museum to the art storage and vice versa. The reason this was impressive to me was because of their system of monitoring the items needing transport. They are always aware ahead of time what needs to travel to or from storage or the museum. This way, MoMA can keep the trucks loaded round trip, meaning that there is hardly ever empty trucks driving between the two facilities. This system cuts down on unnecessary emissions and money since it reduces trips.

Ashley Dodd finished the session by talking about the storage facility that SFMoMA bought and built out for their museum. Having storage that you get to design to specific needs sounds like a dream situation when one first hears about it, but I had never considered many of the issues that can arise from owning your own storage space. The cost of buying and building out space to store a collection are obvious hurdles for anyone wanting to go down this road. However, the staffing, maintenance, and organization of the collection management of such space are not things that you typically think about when you are longing to have a larger storage facility built to the institution's specifications. Ashley also brought up a good point of when a museum stores art within a fine art warehouse, there is a relationship that develops between the museum and the storage facility. The relationship between the storage company and the museum allows for a partnership to create, allowing each to focus on aspects of managing the collection that as apposed to the institution having to manage everything themselves. Then there is the internal struggle of having to justify elements of the storage as necessary as space, inevitably, becomes less and less as the warehouse fills up.

All three speakers gave fascinating insights into this maddening subject. What I found the most interesting after listening to all three of them talk was that, regardless of their storage situation, the same themes of space, budget, personnel, and careful collection management came up with each speaker. I could not have been the only one to attend this session that has the feeling that



there is never enough space, or the moments that there is the space seem brief, regardless of which option of dealing with storage a museum has chosen. Whether the institution has a facility of its own to store its collection, which initially cost far more than renting, or if they rent, both options require a significant investment of the museum's budget. Staffing varies between the two options, with a trusted fine arts storage company where they hire and manage their employees, or if the museum owns its storage, the institution has to have more oversight with staffing. However, owning requires a broader scope of work to maintain. Then the most vital part: efficient collections management, either with renting to avoid the problem of "out of sight out of mind" that one of the speakers mentioned or with a museum owning their storage since you no longer share the burden of organization with a fine arts storage company. Though there was not a magic bullet given during this session to fix the issue of storage that every museum deals with, it was comforting to know that our institution was not alone in this problem. But I can only hope for the day the ARCS conference has a session called "Storage: All of Your Problems Resolved."

*Submitted by Schuyler Shireman, Assistant Registrar and Installation Manager
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