



modern storage

HIGH CAPACITY STORAGE FOR A HIGH FASHION MUSEUM



a renovated space for a stunning collection

This internationally recognized college for design, fashion, art, communications, and business is open to the public and maintains an ambitious exhibition schedule, drawing from its extensive collection to mount five exhibitions per year.

The collection comprises around 50,000 objects from many of the world's most well-known designers. When pieces aren't on display, they're housed in two 5,000-square-foot climate-controlled rooms that are fitted with high-density shelving on compact mobile systems. Organized alphabetically by designer, the collections area is a model of best practices for collections storage.

The area wasn't always like this, though: the museum was founded in the late sixties and the collections area had become overcrowded after decades of growth. An influx of new staff in the early 2000s led to a renewed desire to gain accreditation from the American Alliance of Museums (AAM), a prestigious distinction that recognizes museums for following best practice and achieving their mission. The goal of gaining accreditation inspired a major effort to renovate the collections area.

Achieving AAM accreditation was one of the main drivers behind the renovation.

A Plan to Optimize Limited Space

A significant portion of the AAM accreditation process involves following best practices for collections storage. Expanding the overcrowded storage rooms was out of the question, given the landlocked nature of the museum's building and the demand for educational spaces within it.

"We weren't getting any more space on campus," said the Senior Conservator, who played an instrumental role in planning the renovation. "We had those two rooms and that was it. There would be no expansion, no adding on, and so we knew we had to maximize volume."

The senior registrar and her team conducted a thorough inventory to determine exactly what needed to be stored and how much space was needed to properly house and store thousands of costumes, shoes, hats, and other accessories.



"We weren't getting any more space. We knew we had to maximize volume."
- Senior Conservator



They decided that the best way to maximize volume would be to install compact, mobile storage systems. The layout is clean and simple: the architect relocated the access doors to create one long central aisle through each room, with high-density carriages on either side. The carriages were fitted with 4-Post shelving that was configured to optimize space on the interior.

ROOM TO GROW

Because this fashion museum continues to build its collection in a limited space, the storage equipment was designed to provide room to grow without expanding the rooms' footprint. The shelving can be reconfigured without special tools, and compact shelving allows staff to safely store many more objects in the same space as before.

A SECURE SETTING

The compact mobile system offers protection from dust, light, and any intentional and/or accidental discharge from overhead fire protection systems. Museum staff place and retrieve objects as needed, and museum visitors can view selections from the collection in the galleries. Researchers can view objects online and in study areas.

PARTNERS IN PRECISION

The local distributor collaborated on the system layout and performed the installation. "We gave all the dimensions to them and there was not one issue," the Senior Conservator said. "Everything was spot on. We were thrilled with the installation; it was totally perfect."

Successful Accreditation Accreditation from the AAM involves a rigorous internal review of a museum's facilities and practices, followed by an on-site evaluation by external museum professionals. Collections stewardship is one of the seven core standards on which a museum is assessed. After years of preparation, renovation, rehousing, and organizing, this fashion museum received accreditation in 2012. The peer reviewers found the collections to be "well organized and carefully preserved."

"Listen to the architects, the space planners, the engineers. Draw upon their knowledge."

- Senior Conservator

To others embarking on a storage facilities renovation, the Senior Conservator offered these words of advice: "You absolutely must have institutional support. And you have to be willing to learn about things they didn't teach you in school. Listen to the architects, the space planners, the engineers. Draw upon their knowledge. It's a lot of work, but it's our job."





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