



## Museums for America

Sample Application MA-251740-OMS-22  
Project Category: Collections Stewardship and Access

### Denver Art Museum

Amount awarded by IMLS:	\$250,000
Amount of cost share:	\$370,045

The Denver Art Museum will implement environmental improvements in its art storage area by installing new storage screens for large, two-dimensional artworks. This project will include inventorying, moving, rehousing, and documenting new locations for works in the collection. Museum staff will hire and train two part-time collections assistants for the project, and staff will work with a contracted fine art shipper to move works in the collection from an off-site location to a new building on the museum's campus. As a result of the project, the project team will make works in the collection more accessible internally for staff as well as for public researchers visiting the collection.

Attached are the following components excerpted from the original application.

- Narrative
- Schedule of Completion

When preparing an application for the next deadline, be sure to follow the instructions in the current Notice of Funding Opportunity for the grant program and project category to which you are applying.

## Proposal Narrative

The Denver Art Museum (DAM) seeks support from the IMLS's Museums for America program, for the second phase of a two-phase Collections Stewardship project to implement critical environmental improvements in its Frederic C. Hamilton Building art storage area. This project fulfills the agency-level goal to increase public access by supporting stewardship of museum collections.

The goals for this project are to improve access to and preservation of oversize two-dimensional artworks – paintings, drawings, and photography – by installing fifty moveable storage screens, adjoining forty new screens installed during phase one. Department collections impacted by this project include Asian, Indigenous, Latin American, Modern and Contemporary, and Photography. This is an institutional priority that concludes a years-long effort to complete museum-wide storage improvement and reorganization plans. The project was divided into two phases to make best use of available labor and resources, and the focus of this proposal is the second phase.<sup>1</sup>

### *Project Justification*

Enhanced storage and preventive preservation capacity have figured into strategic plans since the addition of the Hamilton Building in 2006. The current project will complete a Vision 2021 strategic goal related to “completing the campus” while supporting the next strategic plan priority to strengthen and grow collections, to include the conclusion of the effort to implement critical environmental enhancements that improve access to and preservation of collections. (See Strategic Plan Summary.) Storage improvements are aligned also to support new curatorial directions related to curatorial appointments in the last five years in the Asian, Indigenous, Latin American, and Modern and Contemporary Art departments.

Curatorial and institutional collection plans that strengthen collections through acquisitions and refinements will continue to prioritize acquisition of new work by contemporary artists, many of which are oversized, and often with an emphasis on work by women and artists of color.<sup>2</sup> Between the Hamilton Building and the now-renovated Martin Building, there are eleven floors displaying collections and special exhibitions. Oversize works will especially feature in the Modern and Contemporary Galleries in the third and fourth floors of the Hamilton Building<sup>3</sup>, and in the Martin Building galleries for Indigenous Arts of North America (second and third floors), art of Latin America (fourth floor), Asian art (fifth floor), and in a new 6,500-square-foot Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Gallery featuring permanent collection exhibitions organized around a theme.

Prior to the start of phase one, Hamilton Building art storage housed approximately 6,000 objects. It is the only storage area on the museum campus with the ceiling height to accommodate oversized works. Of the artworks stored here, 1,250 paintings were stored in bins, and of those, 350 are

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<sup>1</sup> Phase 1 has been generously funded in part by a 2021 grant from the IMLS. That project period will be completed between September 1, 2021 and September 30, 2022.

<sup>2</sup> Strategic planning goals and departmental collection plans articulate curatorial directions for collection growth and refinement. Recent examples include acquisitions by women artists and artists of color including Mark Bradford, Manuel Álvarez Bravo, Julie Buffalohead (Ponca), Jordan Casteel, Shantell Martin, Senga Nengudi, Marianne Nicholson (Haida), and a major collection of paintings by Japanese women painters of the Edo period, among others.

<sup>3</sup> The Modern & Contemporary Galleries were deinstalled in 2017 to make room for cross-collection displays while the Martin Building permanent collections galleries were closed for renovations. Following a pair of thematic exhibitions in those galleries scheduled through winter 2023, the permanent collection will be reinstalled beginning in spring 2023.

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considered large or oversize paintings and works on paper with dimensions between six and twelve feet in length or height. It is also where works on paper and three-dimensional objects are stored flat on rivetier shelving and in Delta cabinets.<sup>4</sup> The section that is described in the floor plan accompanying this proposal would be completed in this phase two. (See Supporting Documents 1.)

At the start of phase one, onsite bin storage for oversize works in the Hamilton Building was at capacity, with no room to add more bins. Two dimensional artworks must also have protection around their edges, frames, collars, and wooden travel frames to reduce risk for potential damage from handling and movement in and out of bins. Furthermore, bin storage does not optimize volume, leaving unused space within and above the bins. As a result, many oversize artworks must be stored in offsite facilities.

Oversize works at offsite storage are in travel frames or crates and are staged on dollies and in aisles. Accessing these works requires excessive movement to allow forklift and staff access in the aisles to other pallet-rack-stored works and is tremendously labor and time intensive for collection managers, conservators, curators, and researchers accessing collections. These conditions require two to three art handlers to pull, pack and unpack, transport, stage, and re-shelve works, adding the inherent risks of movement by truck and staff between facilities. Transferring oversize works from offsite storage to onsite screens will open up those aisles for safer, easier, and more efficient access for all collections involved. Completing both phases one and two will not only improve access and safe handling onsite, it will improve access for other collections also stored in offsite storage.

When complete, phase one of the project will improve conditions for many works, leaving only the remaining section two of storage for improvement. Most work in phase one is structured to conclude by September 30, 2022, with only remaining activities like post-move inventory overlapping with the start of the phase two. This provides an ideal window to conclude phase one and prepare for the start of phase two. The most critical value of this project will be the significant improvements in safety and efficiency in access and handling, the increased capacity for storing onsite a larger number of oversize two-dimensional works, and the ability to better accommodate collection growth stemming from strategic priorities and curatorial directions.

Because the museum prioritizes a busy and diverse calendar of exhibitions, staff and visitors will benefit from improved access. When new acquisitions arrive, they are often featured in permanent collection displays and new acquisitions highlights shows. The Bonfils-Stanton Foundation Gallery is designed for thematic, cross-departmental collaborations, prioritizing increased use of permanent collections for temporary exhibitions. The DAM also makes collections available to visiting researchers and regularly loans objects from its collections to museums around the world. In developing their own creative curriculum, resident artists frequently access the collections. Access can take many forms, and improved storage reassures artists and donors making gifts of art that artworks are responsibly cared for, in the service of public access.

With the entire campus now open, the museum anticipates an eventual return to pre-COVID annual attendance following the more-than two-year closure of half the campus. Under normal

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<sup>4</sup> These areas of storage for works on paper and three-dimensional works will not be impacted by this project.

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circumstances, the museum welcomes 700,000 to 800,000 visitors annually. Future planning anticipates this, and in fact, an essential part of the Martin Building renovations was a need to improve infrastructure and program capacity to accommodate high rates of visitation. Increased exhibition space afforded by Martin Building renovations responds to the need for program growth. Improving safety and access is always a consideration in these overall institutional plans, thus elevating completion of collection reorganization and storage improvement to a top priority. It not only concludes the Vision 2021 strategic plan goal to “complete the campus”, it also supports the new strategic plan intentions to leverage our world-class collections and present exceptional programs.

The DAM maintains 39,976 square feet of museum-standard art storage in three buildings on the museum campus: two areas on the Martin Building lower level (9,016 square feet and 7,130 square feet), Martin Building sixth floor (3,205 square feet), Bannock administration building (9,000 square feet), and Hamilton Building (10,525 square feet). Since 2008, the museum has upgraded an existing storage area (Martin sixth floor) and built new ones to accommodate collection growth (Bannock; part of Martin lower level). Storage and handling practices are guided by a collections management policy, most recently revised and approved by the board of trustees in July 2019.<sup>5</sup>

Projects were coordinated to capitalize on available funding, and often planned to coincide with other projects that provided optimal opportunities for coordinating staff and space for movement. Overall, improvements include new art storage space in the Bannock administration building equipped with compactor storage (completed in 2014), new moveable screen storage for paintings and rolled textiles (sixth floor, Martin Building, in phases completed 2009 to 2015), construction of new art storage in the renovated Martin Building including a 1,000-square-foot cold storage vault funded in part by the IMLS (completed in 2021), and now, completing improvements to Hamilton Building storage.

### ***Project Work Plan***

For the proposed phase two project, the DAM will purchase and install fifty moveable storage screens in Hamilton storage section two for two-dimensional artworks. All work will be completed over twenty-four months from September 1, 2022 to August 31, 2024. (See Schedule of Completion.) Project activities are sequenced to be completed within the scope of day-to-day museum work and are part of collections management work plans. (See Supporting Documents 2, Collections Management Three-Year Work Plan.)

At the project start, the team will convene to review project plans, order screens, and schedule screen installation, artwork preparation, and movement. Staff will complete a pre-move inventory and orient available trained collections assistants and conservation technicians to the project’s scope and activities. The team will meet at regular intervals throughout the project period to review and assess project progress and identify challenges. Meeting regularly allows the team to track and

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<sup>5</sup> The Denver Art Museum’s Collections Management Policy (CMP) is a core institutional document that outlines the Museum’s collection stewardship standards and is an essential part of the museum’s operating mission and accredited professional status. DAM’s CMP is not a single policy but a series of connected policies, statements and associated guidelines and procedures. These articulate the museum’s professional standards regarding objects under the museum’s care and serves as a guide for staff and related stakeholders.

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review progress, anticipate and respond to problems as they arise, and implement changes where necessary to achieve project objectives.

At the start of this project period, 110 oversize works formerly stored in bins will have been rehoused on the new storage screens installed during phase one and will occupy approximately 25% of the available screen storage capacity. This will allow around 400 artworks from the phase two section to be rehoused on the phase one section screens. These will occupy the next 65% of screen capacity. The remaining 10% of screen capacity will be used to accommodate an additional 20 oversize works from off-site with room for new acquisitions and staging needs. There will also be room to add smaller two-dimensional works to fill the space and maximize capacity. Most of these works will come from the phase two area as well, moving them from bins to screens, and partially clearing out the space for phase two work. In this section, there are also 60 framed objects from the photography collection that will be unframed for more compact storage in solander boxes, eliminating the need for these objects to be returned to occupy screen storage space. Photography unframing will be completed by the same staff tasked with installing backing boards for paintings bound for screen storage. This will leave 240 works to be removed from the phase two section for the start of hardware and screen installation. These will be moved to temporary art storage offsite for the duration of hardware and screen installation.

The area where phase one artworks are housed, as well as other unimpacted areas of Hamilton storage in Delta cabinets, bins, or on shelving, will be protected with plastic sheeting during track and screen installation. Discarded storage frames and/or deconstructed bin storage will be offered to other institutions for reuse (the Reuse Network is one method) or recycled rather than sent to a landfill. Bins and other wooden materials that cannot be recycled will be chipped for use as compost and mulch (a service provided by Blue Bear Recycling Services in Denver).

Work to prepare the artworks for screen storage entails dusting and vacuuming the reverse of paintings with stretchers where dust can accumulate, in preparation for installing backing boards that provide protection to the backside of the painting and help to minimize lateral movement of the canvas. Photography and documentation for any provenance information visible on the back of paintings will be added to database prior to backing. Hanging hardware will be replaced for artworks that need it. This work will be conducted by collections assistants overseen by conservation staff. Custom A-frame carts constructed during the phase one grant period will be used to accommodate the large artwork sizes. For works that will be moved temporarily offsite, and for those that do not already have protective travel frames, collars will be made and installed as needed for safe handling and movement. Round trip transportation estimates for offsite moving are included in the project budget. Offsite storage will be reorganized to accommodate the medium-sized works, and oversize works will be sorted in leased temporary storage adjacent to our long-term storage, provided by UOVO. The phase two area will then be sealed off with protective plastic sheet barriers, and existing painting bins and shelving disassembled and removed. The area will then be prepared for delivery and installation of the screens.

Following screen installation, the team will dismantle the protection area plastic sheet barriers and set up ARGUS (collections management database) locations, produce a barcode system of identification and labeling, and begin artwork movement back into the space with tags and labels

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for identification and storage location. Areas for staging will be allocated and artworks will be moved in, unpacked, and installed on the screens. A preliminary post move inventory will be completed, and the storage capacity remaining will be double checked to determine what volume of works remaining in long-term off-site storage can be brought to the campus.

An additional review will be conducted for works that have been in long-term off-site storage to determine what should return for screen storage on-site. Collection managers will consult with conservation and curatorial departments as part of this review process to determine other priorities for selecting works to return to campus, such as stability, fragility, valuation, works frequently requested for access, or works included in future program, display, loan, research, or publication plans. Once the list has been determined, works will be scheduled for transport, returned to the museum, and unpacked. They will be cleaned, documented, and backed, and any hanging hardware necessary replaced, then allocated to screen locations. Off-site storage will be reorganized to better utilize space freed up by works returning to campus, and to move crated works onto pallet racks that have been occupying floor space in the aisles. A final post-move inventory of phase two works after placement on screens will be performed, and remaining works inspected and accommodated with backing needs. The project concludes with a final cleaning following completion of all activities.

Two-dimensional objects stored in sections one and two of the impacted storage areas represent a total of 19,100 vertical square feet. When complete, phase one/section one will provide 14,712 vertical square feet of screen storage. Phase two/section two will eventually provide an additional 17,904 vertical square feet of screen storage, bringing the total for vertical square feet to 32,616 when both phases are complete, a 70% increase in overall capacity. This will provide vertical square feet sufficient to accommodate all two-dimensional and oversize artworks currently in Hamilton storage, plus 11,000 additional vertical square feet. Of this additional space, about 3,000 vertical square feet will be allocated for acquisitions and departmental expansion, and the remaining 8,000 vertical square feet will accommodate the return of 75-80% of oversize works currently stored offsite (these works are in travel frames or collars and are the best candidates for benefitting from onsite screen storage). When phases one and two of the project are complete, 225 of 254 objects stored in bins offsite – 89% - will be returned to onsite storage, freeing space for crated works to be stored under pallet rack shelving.

Project staff have extensive experience managing large-scale collections and conservation projects of this type within appointed timeframes. Prior projects to upgrade existing storage including phase one of the present two-phase project, equip new storage in the museum's administration building, and coordinate complex collections moves position this team to implement all aspects of the project successfully. The project will also benefit from the same staff continuing the work as they transition from completing phase one to the start of phase two.

Project Director Lori Iliff will provide direct oversight of all project activities. Silber Director of Conservation Sarah Melching will provide conservation oversight at all stages of project implementation. Collections Manager Juhl Wojahn and Associate Collections Manager Stefani Pendergast and Assistant Collections Manager Erika Heacock will lead coordination of storage screen purchase, installation, preparation, and art movement including all related inventory, documentation, and object rehousing. This team will also consult with curators about layout

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decisions. Additional paintings conservation and preparation oversight will be provided by associate conservator [Yasuko Ogino](#).

Because phase one project timing coincides with the conclusion of the Martin Building project, specifically the movement of artwork back into the building's storage areas and permanent collection galleries, that project benefitted from the availability of trained and experienced part-time labor. With the timing of this phase of the project scheduled to overlap with the conclusion of phase one, those individuals can again be retained and assigned to this project. These individuals will be responsible for artwork movement, packing, transport of works on- or offsite, construction barrier preparation, installation of backing boards on paintings as needed, inventory checks, location setup, data entry and location updates, escorting screen installation teams, and recycling or reusing old collars or travel frames for works installed on screens. Commencing Hamilton Building art storage improvements after Martin Building and phase one work conclude is the most beneficial approach and minimizes artwork movement to accommodate project sequencing.

Museum-standard screen storage will be sourced from and installed by Crystallizations Systems, a firm we worked with previously on phase one and which provided new state-of-the-art storage solutions in other storage areas on the campus. Museum staff/key project personnel are long-tenured with the DAM and have been involved with most or all of the storage projects completed to date. The project team has experience with all aspects of screen installation, and with implementing storage location and data systems for managing access and record keeping (ARGUS locations). (See Project Staff.)

The museum works closely with the City of Denver and the Governor's Office, along with other cultural and scientific organizations, to ensure adherence to public health directives. While we cannot predict the potential for ongoing COVID impacts to this project, we will continue to closely monitor the situation through these relationships.

### ***Project Results***

The intended results are the completion of the second and final phase of a two-phase project. At the conclusion of the proposed project period, the Hamilton Building art storage area will be equipped with a total of 90 new storage screens (40 in phase one, 50 in phase two) and artwork rehoused. If the present proposal is selected for funding, it will allow us to complete the work over an uninterrupted sequence of three years. This approach maximizes available funding opportunities, as well as our own general funds, and minimizes repeated artwork movement.

Combined, each phase of this project advances the critical goals of improving object housing and safety and increasing onsite access to a much larger number of oversize works and allows easier access for offsite storage. Artwork storage, preservation, and access will be substantially improved, and in turn will better support curatorial directions, plans for an acquisitions and gifts of art campaign, and an ambitious DAM-organized and traveling exhibition calendar. Because the DAM has committed to enhancing environmentally friendly measures wherever possible, this project will also result in the sustainable disposal of materials through donations for reuse, and through recycling efforts, like mulching wood products rather than sending them to landfills.

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Collections management projects are shared with museum staff during all staff meetings. Collections management staff also use projects such as this one for conference presentations to other museum professionals and shared with visitors through blog posts, social media, and occasional “behind the scenes” access tours.

In summary, this project supports the museum’s priorities for responsible care, preservation, and stewardship of collections held in trust for the benefit of the visiting public. It will enhance access to artworks, bring the Hamilton Building storage area up to the standards of the museum’s other storage areas, provide opportunities for sharing with staff, visitors, and the professional field about the museum’s collections management practice and responsibilities, and support new strategic goals for collections strengthening and planned growth.



Activity	Grant Project Period												
	DAM FY 2022				DAM FY 2023								
	CY 2022				CY 2023								
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	
Project will commence with initial team meetings to review the project plans, schedule of work, other project details													
Retain project assistants from previous grant, train new project assistants if needed.													
Schedule Crystallizations site visits for verification of measurements (if needed by installers)													
Pre-move inventory of Phase 2 section													
Order supplies needed for project (hardware, coroplast, blueboard, etc.)													
Place screen order with Crystallizations & manufacturing begins (early order placement locks in manufacturing price to avoid supply chain inflation seen in 2021)													
Vacuum and dust the reverse of paintings remaining on site prior to attaching backing boards; Photograph and document any provenance information found on the back of paintings													
Begin attaching backing boards for paintings located onsite (e.g. fragile if being moved) and continue backing project as space on campus allows, works that will be moved off site will have priority and will be completed first.													
Replace hanging hardware as required													
Move Hamilton artwork impacted by screen install to front of Hamilton storage or to another area on-site													
Prepare offsite storage to receive works moving to Uovo warehouse storage.													
Prep, pack, and transport (via Uovo) artworks heading offsite by constructing collars for protection (as necessary); Receive works at Uovo warehouse off site storage													
Oversize artwork stored in Uovo space during installation of Phase 2 screens													
Demo painting bins and remove shelving in phase one area													
Set up construction protection for remaining artwork (as necessary)													
Finish moving and begin breaking down existing storage equipment													
Delivery and installation of ceiling mounts and screens													
Dismantle construction protection													
ARGUS location setup for screens													
Print, laminate, cut and adhere barcode location labels; Print object barcode tags for paintings (as necessary)													
Update new map for Hamilton storage to reflect screen locations													
Inventory works in long-term offsite storage													
Vacuum and dust reverse of paintings coming from long term off site storage													
Add backing boards, document verso, and hanging hardware to paintings brought from long term offsite storage, as needed													
Hang returned and backed objects on screens													

Activity	DAM FY 2024											
	CY 2024											
	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug
Move paintings transferred to off-site back to main museum campus, unpack, and install on screens												
Inventory works in long-term offsite storage												
Evaluate with conservation and curatorial for prioritizing works to be brought to main campus for screen storage												
Return selected works to main museum campus												
Vacuum and dust reverse of paintings coming from long term off site storage												
Add backing boards, document verso, and hanging hardware to paintings brought from long term offsite storage, as needed												
Hang returned and backed objects on screens												
Demo and recycle T-frames not being kept (as needed during unpacking)												
Post-move inventory												
Consolidate off site storage areas for object efficiency												
Share and disseminate												