

Case Study

# ART PRESERVE OF THE JOHN MICHAEL KOHLER ARTS CENTER

Sheboygan, Wisconsin

The Art Preserve of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center, 2019. Photo courtesy of John Michael Kohler Arts Center.



**T**he John Michael Kohler Arts Center has been involved in the preservation, study, and exhibition of artist-built environments for nearly 50 years. The Art Preserve was created to store and display these works. Designing solutions to house and display such a diverse collection required foresight, teamwork, and attention to detail.



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**Sam Gappmayer** | Director of John Michael Kohler Art Center

### *Reflecting artists' environments*

Storing and displaying artist-built environments present unique challenges. "These are instances where artists go beyond one-off pieces to create large-scale environments that they intend to be experienced as a whole rather than piecemeal," said Sam Gappmayer, director of the John Michael Kohler Arts Center. The collection includes a house covered in glitter, a complex work of sculpture that the artist believed had healing properties, and an artist's yard that was populated by sculptures made out of concrete and found objects.

Many of the objects now featured at the Art Preserve were formerly stored in the John Michael Kohler Art Center's underground storage facility and in off-site warehouses. The purpose of the Art Preserve was to consolidate these works under one roof, make them more accessible, and display them in a way that would give scholars and casual visitors a more complete sense of the environments that these artists created.

"It felt like the right time to have all that work in one place where scholars and other people who have a love for this type of work could see it," Gappmayer said. "And not just in bits and pieces, but in large bodies of the work."

## THE SOLUTION



*Art racks form “walls” to create an immersive experience...*



*...and allow staff to instantly change out works on exhibit.*

### ***Creative solutions for visible storage***

The design team wanted the building itself to reflect the artists' creativity. The building is constructed of materials that many of the artists used in their work, like stone, wood, and concrete, and sculptural timbers at the building's entrance evoke a woodland setting.

These themes continue in the building's interior. "We didn't want something boxy or orthogonal," Gappmayer said. "These are often artists who take non-traditional paths, so there aren't many 90-degree corners inside." Each artist's work is presented in a "tableau," or a distinct, immersive setting that reflects their environment.

The design team worked with Spacesaver's engineers to design creative visible storage solutions throughout the facility.

*A small compactor system is designed to accommodate future acquisitions.*



*Oversized drawers and trays securely store small items close to an artist's other works.*

*The Art Preserve creates an immersive environment while also protecting collections.*



*Custom display cabinets protect items on display and incorporate additional storage and lighting within each unit.*



*Flat-file cabinets preserve and organize small objects and works on paper.*

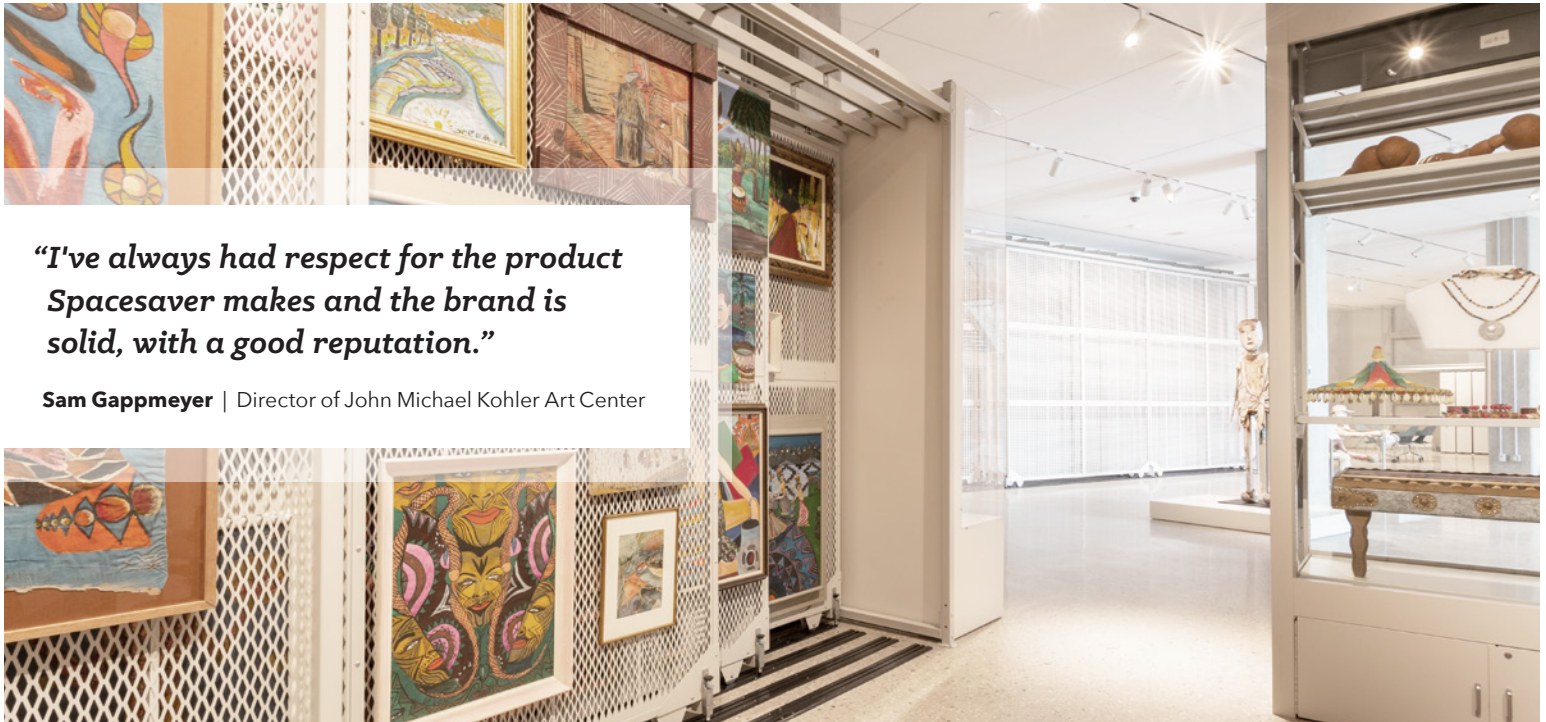


*Elevated ceiling-mounted racks pull out over flat-file cabinets to recreate the density of an artist's apartment.*

## *'A Lively Space'*

The end result is an engaging, dynamic facility with room to grow. "It's a lively space," Gappmeyer said. "It will lend itself to morphing as we continue to collect and rearrange different areas to be able to include new material that comes into the collection."

Spacesaver was the ideal partner for the project. "There were lots of good reasons to go with Spacesaver," Gappmeyer said. "I've always had respect for the product Spacesaver makes and the brand is solid, with a good reputation. We were able to work with Spacesaver to create solutions that reflected a storage aesthetic, but that also protected the art in ways that it wouldn't need to be protected in a back storage room."



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**Sam Gappmeyer** | Director of John Michael Kohler Art Center



## ***Making your vision a reality***

Spacesaver's robust engineering teams and custom manufacturing capabilities can help bring your design team's vision to reality. Contact us to learn more about how our in-house teams partner with your nearby Spacesaver consultant to optimize space while also protecting collections for generations to come.

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