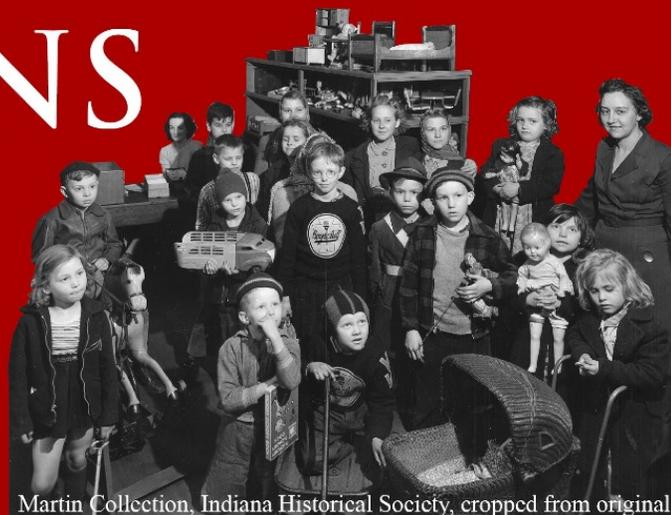


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COLLECTIONS

Advisor



Martin Collection, Indiana Historical Society, cropped from original

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Tales From The Storage Vault

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When I arrived at the Eiteljorg Museum in July 2004, the museum was in the midst of an expansion. The expansion provided additional gallery space, greater visitor amenities like the Sky City Café, a new education center and more. We hope these additions have improved the visitor experience, but as the director of museum collections, I was immediately aware that they wouldn't directly improve the environment for the collections. This initially caused me some concern, especially since the people hiring me had volunteered that the vault was full and the museum was actively building the collection. In fact, the collection has grown by 2,018 objects since July 2004!

While this may seem like an impossible situation, museum professionals are resourceful. Although shelves were full, a lot of potential storage space was being wasted. Over the last several years, we have implemented several storage enhancements to improve the safety of objects and the efficiency of the space and shelving within the space.

For example, the Katsinas were previously stored lying flat on open shelving. Carved Hopi Katsina figures are tools to teach children about the supernatural beings that represent the



Amanda Brekhus and Christa Barleben, IUPUI Museum Studies graduate students, are creating custom-made boxes for collections objects.

spiritual essence of things that are real in this world (i.e. animals, insects, plants) and the masked dancers who represent these beings in Hopi ceremonial dances. – White Wolf James, Assistant Curator of Native American Art, History, and Culture, Eiteljorg Museum. Katsinas often have feathers or other fragile parts attached to the main bodies. In some cases, these parts were being crushed by the weight of the Katsinas resting on them.

Working with interns from the IUPUI Museum Studies program, we began creating customized storage boxes to house the Katsinas. After seeing the difference these storage boxes made, we have since re-housed ceramics, baskets, and beaded clothing items. This labor-intensive project will continue for many years, incorporating new objects as they are added to the collection. By undertaking this work, we have positioned the Eiteljorg Museum curators to continue to build a distinctive collection of Native American and Western art.

To learn how to preserve your historical collections and avoid harm in a collection environment, register for the Indiana Historical Society Local History Services Collections Preservation (Basic) workshop, Tuesday, Oct. 18, 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Elkhart County Museum, Bristol. Discussion will focus on current issues in preservation, such as storage and collection environmental issues, undertaking preservation efforts and exploring conservation techniques. Register by Oct. 10 at www.indianahistory.org/our-services/local-history-services/workshops.

Resources:

- Northern States Conservation Center
<http://collectioncare.org/training/trol.html>
- Conservograms
www.nps.gov/history/museum/publications/
- CCI notes
www.cci-icc.gc.ca/crc/notes/index-eng.aspx
- Connecting to Collections Online Community
www.connectingtocollections.org

Reprinted courtesy of the Eiteljorg Museum of American Indians and Western Art.



Sayutasha, the Long Horn, this Katsina made by Otto Pentewa (Hopi, active 1930-1963) is housed in a custom-made storage box. All materials used in storage mounts and boxes are inert so they will not emit gasses that could deteriorate over time.

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