

Case Study



Bendigo Art Gallery

Creating a consistent standard of excellence:
Bendigo Art Gallery and Dexion.

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Dexion helps Bendigo Art Gallery stay ahead of the pack with new mobile art racking solutions.

Bendigo Art Gallery is the largest and one of the oldest regional galleries in Australia. Established in 1887, the gallery is a major cultural hub for the region and displays exhibitions that draw visitors from across Australia and the world.

When the Gallery moved to View Street in 1890, it occupied a single room of the Bendigo Volunteer Rifle Club. The Gallery expanded just seven years later to include a new building, Drury Court, and has continued to expand its exhibition space and collections progressively for more than 120 years.

Over this time, the Gallery has expanded their collection to include nearly 5000 exhibits, including paintings, sculptures, work on paper, multimedia, indigenous works, decorative arts, furniture, and historical documents. Renowned for its collection of 19th century European artworks and 19th and 20th century Australian art, complemented by a strong collection of contemporary Australian art, the Gallery also periodically hosts international exhibitions which are a major drawcard for the region.

Up until their recent renovations and implementation of a dedicated storage space using Dexion's racking solutions, the Gallery was forced to house much of its collection in storage in Melbourne, with less than 40% of the collection accessible at the Gallery at any one time.

According to Sandra Bruce, Bendigo Art Gallery's Collections Manager, "We haven't been able to store our entire collection for more than a decade because we outgrew our existing facilities. During that time we've had to store a proportion of our collection at a commercial facility in Melbourne. This was costly, inefficient and potentially damaging to the artworks. We also have a lot of requests for access to artworks by researchers and academics, however because most of the collection was in storage we couldn't help out as much as we would have liked to."

In 2010 the Gallery, through the City of Greater Bendigo, initiated fundraising for a new Gallery wing and a dedicated storage area on site that would have enough space to store all of the Gallery's collection in one place.

"For the last five years we've been very successful in hosting international exhibitions as the exclusive Australian venue, which draws hundreds of thousands of visitors to the region. Our proven track record gave us the opportunity to approach the Government for funding. Between the State Government and the City of Greater Bendigo we were able to secure almost \$8M in funding for the expansion," Bruce explained. Additional philanthropic funding was contributed by the Gallery's Board.

"We knew that it wasn't just about adding a new Gallery space, we really needed to improve our back of house operations and that meant getting a new purpose built store room. I'd actually worked with Dexion in a previous role and knew that they had a track record of delivering systems for museums and galleries." Bruce continued.

With funding secured, Bruce worked tirelessly to analyse and catalogue all of the Gallery's collection and then approached Dexion to discuss suitable products. In consultation with Dexion, Bruce identified the most appropriate art racking storage solutions for housing each of the collection's elements, as well as drafting a proposed floor plan for the architects incorporating Dexion's storage solutions.

Once the project was confirmed, the City of Greater Bendigo commissioned Melbourne architectural firm Fender Katsalidis Architects to design the new wing and storage space. The Gallery had a long standing relationship with the architectural firm, which had contributed designs for refurbishments and expansions to the site since 1996. Andrew Walter, Architect and Project Manager at Fender Katsalidis for the Bendigo Art Gallery project, also approached Dexion for assistance with the design.



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"We'd worked with Dexion before and knew that they were one of the top rung suppliers for museum and art gallery storage solutions," said Walter. "We knew that the Gallery had also approached Dexion for some preliminary discussions as they gave us a brief incorporating Dexion products and a suggested floor plan. We had some ideas of our own, based on our previous experience on MONA [Tasmania's Museum of Old and New Art], so we brainstormed some options and then went to Dexion to work out the finer details, in terms of the layout and how we would actually fit the racking into the space," Walter continued.

"There were six columns required in the storage space. We had to plan the design to work with the columns, ensuring sufficient space and circulation for accessing the racking. It was a challenge but we got there with Dexion's help," Walter explained.

Owen Lewis, from Dexion confirmed, "Andrew was looking for special information regarding mobile art racking. We were only too happy to help and provided him with lots of information about the capabilities of the products we offer, as well as advice on space planning for the Gallery's new storage area."

"We called Dexion in for a briefing session in the beginning, followed by a workshop to work out the details. After that, we worked in conjunction with Dexion's teams in Melbourne and Sydney through correspondence to complete the finishing touches. We needed to work out where the racking would go in relation to the columns, the collective weight of the racking and exhibits and how much horizontal and vertical space the racking, particularly the mobile art racking, would use. We worked all that out with Dexion during the planning stage," Walter added.

Walter believes that Dexion are known as a market leader in storage solutions for museums and galleries. "It was a good experience working with Dexion on the design. They have a really good knowledge base that was helpful in informing our design decisions. Based on the knowledge and experience they have with international quality standards for galleries, we would definitely call upon them again. We like to talk to the leaders in the field, especially when they're willing to pass on that expertise and work through all the particulars that we worked through with Dexion," Walter concluded.

In August 2013, the City of Greater Bendigo completed their analysis of the six bids competing for the tender and awarded the tender to Dexion.

"The main factors for us in determining the winning bid were cost and viability, in particular ensuring the most efficient use of the space for hanging our two dimensional works. Dexion were able to offer a system which no other tenderer could, the mobile art racking solution, which was the most efficient solution for the space and their price was also tailored to the Gallery's budget," Bruce explained.

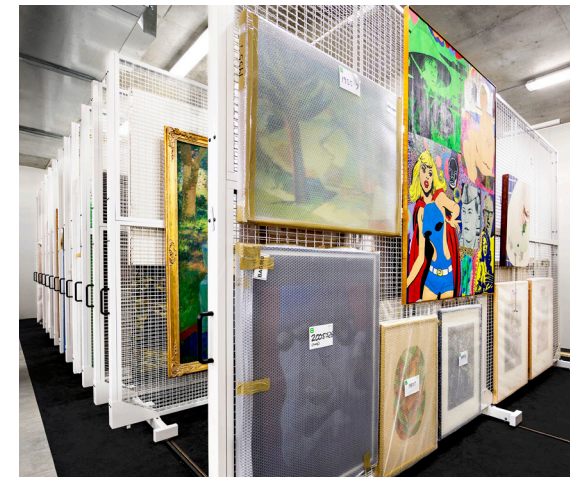
To store the approximately 5000 artworks, including paintings with frames in a variety of sizes, weights and depths as well as unusually shaped sculptures and other works, the bid included longspan shelving, flat file cabinets, mobile and wall mounted art racking and a multi-bay compactus. Space utilisation was a major factor in the proposed solution.

Bruce continued, "Our collection is predominately fine art, however we do have some decorative arts and furniture as well, and we collect across all media so we've got sculptures, painting, works on paper, a little bit of textiles as well as ceramics. Pretty much any medium you can think of that art could be made out of we've got it, so we needed to find a storage solution that would be as user friendly as possible."

The solution provided by Dexion included two Single Entry Bay units of Dexion Ultima Longspan Shelving as well as two Double Entry Bay units of Ultima Longspan Shelving. "With Longspan Shelving, the shelves are quite wide and long, suitable for big, bulky heavy objects that are loaded and unloaded by hand. Longspan Shelving is perfect for the unique sculptures and artefacts that are part of the Gallery's collection," Lewis explained.

To efficiently manage the historical documents and unframed artworks that are part of Bendigo Art Gallery's collection, Dexion's proposal also included 18 Flat File Cabinets. Each cabinet is 1.4 metres wide by .9 metres deep and has 5 shelves. The cabinets are arranged in six columns three cabinets high to make the best use of the available space. Thanks to these cabinets, the Gallery has 90 extra drawers for housing these important objects, which can now be accessed easily by staff to support enquiries from researchers.

"To store paintings of various sizes, shapes and weights, as well as make the most of the available space, our proposal also specified a mobile art racking



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solution which includes a mixture of nested and unnested art racking using movable steel mesh panels,” stated Lewis.

Bruce explains, “During the initial consultation process I enquired about Dexion’s different mobile art racking products looking for a solution which would account for the variety of frame sizes and thicknesses in our collection. Dexion supplied both nested and unnested mobile art racking so I requested a solution that would incorporate both.”

The nested racking, which is more compact, consists of 3m high by 2.5 metre deep single sided powder coated steel mesh panels that are fixed at each end of a 25 metre span, coupled with 26 double sided mobile panels that can be moved manually from side to side to access the paintings. Paintings can be hung anywhere on the steel mesh of the panels.

In front of the nested racking is another row of unnested racking, with the same fixed panels at the ends and 17 double sided hanging art rack panels in the middle. According to Lewis, “The integration of both nested and unnested mobile art racking for the Bendigo Art Gallery project was quite unique. Unnested racking isn’t as compact as nested racking however some of the Gallery’s older artworks have quite deep frames as well as custom sculpture and design in the frame. Our solution caters to both the older frames and the trend towards shallower, lighter frames for more modern artworks.”

To store and secure small sculptural works, Dexion proposed that the Gallery use their Multibay Compactus Unit Solution. “The compactus is our most compact solution,” Lewis elucidated, “similar to Longspan Shelving but with lighter items, the compactus is used for bulky and awkwardly shaped items. It’s pretty much an all in one system. The advantage of the compactus is that it has a smaller footprint and doesn’t take up as much space as Longspan Shelving.”

“The compactus is for smaller 3D objects in our collection,” Bruce added.

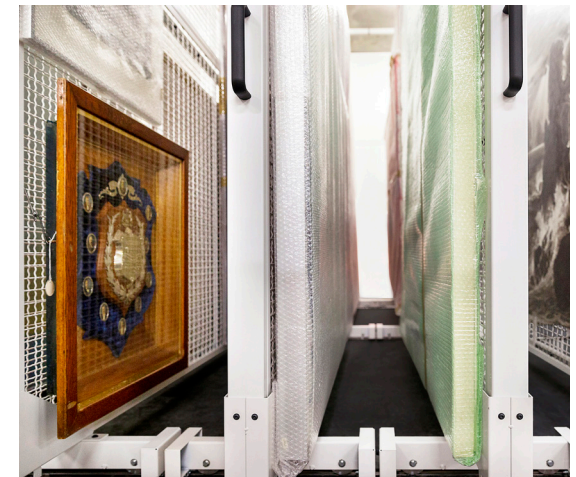
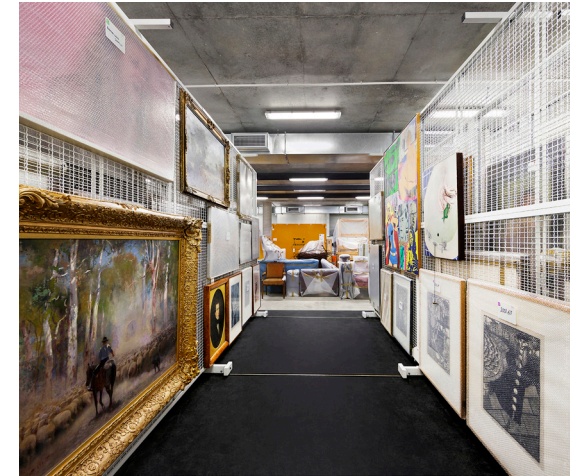
The Multibay Compactus Unit that Dexion provided for Bendigo Art Gallery is quite large, 10 bays long by 5 bays deep. The Compactus works by moving the bays from side to side to create an aisle at any one time between two of the bays. This is a great way for the Gallery to access a large volume of storage space without taking up a lot of floor space. The Compactus at the Gallery comprises 300 separate storage compartments with a total storage area of 360 metres within an 8 metre wide by 6 metre deep space.

Work began on installing Dexion’s storage solutions in the new underground storage space towards the end of 2013. Dexion worked closely with the Gallery and Council, collaborating with Fairbrother Builders during the implementation. The biggest challenge was the distance from Melbourne to Bendigo for site visits but the professionalism of Dexion’s project management team ensured that the storage room was completed by the deadline in early 2014. The Gallery then began to transfer their collection into the storeroom, including relocating all of the artworks from Melbourne, which enabled the Gallery to install an extensive exhibition in time for the grand unveiling of the new eight-gallery wing on the 15 March 2014.

“Up until the installation, the Gallery struggled with storage space. The Gallery can now continue to expand its collection and raise its regional and international profile. The products make the maximum use of the space as well as greatly improving the speed and efficiency with which the Gallery can retrieve and store items. While the products specified were largely driven by the Gallery and the architect, this is a classic example of the client recognising a high quality product. Given the value of the collection, the Gallery and Council would not have wanted to compromise on quality,” concluded Lewis.

“I had a great experience working with Dexion. I found that Dexion aren’t just the supplier of a product, they sit you down and give you the opportunity to talk about your plans and your project and provide feedback. If there are any problems, they step up and help you talk it through to see what solutions can be found. I wouldn’t hesitate to work with Dexion again,” Bruce enthused.

To learn more about Dexion’s pallet racking and shelving expertise, call 1800 100 050 or visit www.dexion.com.au.



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About Dexion

Dexion is a global leader in storage solutions. Solving the materials handling challenges for a diverse range of customers from the office through to the warehouse.

With over 70 years' experience and operations throughout Australia, New Zealand, Asia and the Middle East, Dexion provides a seamless integration of the world's best practice products and management systems to reflect the best in safety, space optimisation, security, and profitability. We also provide customised training, state-of-the-art design tools, active research and development, rigorous product testing and after sales service and support.

Dexion employs over 600 highly skilled staff and operates a global network of independently owned franchises and supply centres. Dexion is Part of the GUD Group and listed on the Australian Stock Exchange

For more information call 1800 100 050, visit www.dexion.com.au or email info@dexion.com.au.



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