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\$3m facelift brings Addison up to date

The Addison Gallery of American Art has had a facelift, and this one is not merely cosmetic. Once inside the neo-classical museum, visitors will notice that the galleries have been painted while they were closed for the summer. But the real changes concern the museum's capacity to care for its 11,000 objects, the construction of a new entranceway and sculpture garden on the Chapel Avenue side and newly installed safeguards that will enable the museum to make use of the natural light that falls through its upper galleries' superb skylights. The \$3 million renovation includes the installation of state-of-the-art climate control systems.

The lower level - until recently "a dark pit," in the words of museum director Jock Reynolds has been transformed by architect Rob Olson into an enormous storage area with floor-to-ceiling metal tracks that will not only adequately house the museum's paintings, but also guarantee easy access for students and interested visitors. In the same vein, the museum has created a videodisc of the entire collection, which may be viewed by visitors. Staff will be available to bring work up from storage on request.

The messy work of exhibition preparation has been moved to nearby Abbot Hall; no longer will turpentine fumes and other pollutants threaten the collection. Also in Abbot Hall, the Addison has installed a huge light-filled

studio where visiting artists-in-residence will work and teach.

The museum's new entrance on its lower level Chapel Avenue side, opposite the Andover Inn, is designed to make special-needs visitors feel welcome. This is the first museum renovation to comply with the new Americans with Disabilities Act, Reynolds says. For example, the old freight elevator has been reconstructed into a passenger elevator with special low controls.

Perhaps the most dramatic accompanying feature will be a new outside sculpture courtyard on this side of the museum. Artists and collectors among Andover alumni have pledged works to this space, including Frank Stella (class of '54), who is creating a new sculpture for the project. Classmate Sidney Unobskey and his wife, Nancy, have donated a work by celebrated sculptor George Rickey.

Less splashy but equally important are the new panels of translucent fiberglass that Olson has installed above the skylights on the top-floor galleries. Over the years, the Addison has been forced to drape this spectacular feature with black plastic to shield works from damaging ultraviolet light. The new screens filter out all UV rays, an invisible but significant change that will fulfill the intentions of the museum's architect, Charles Platt, when he designed the building in 1930.

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