

Pennywise: Affordable Shelving

The problem: Framed artworks and objects of different sizes and weights in need of shelved storage.

The situation: Objects are stored on flimsy and/or inadequate shelving or on the floor in piles.

You may or may not be working with existing shelving that may or may not be great for long term storage of your collection. Whether your storage space is small or large, newly acquired or established; affordable shelving that will maximize your space and storage needs is reassuringly easy to find.

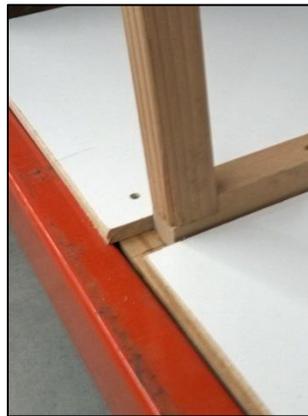
Our solution: pallet rack and storage shelving. They come in a variety of sizes to fit the size and weight of your objects, can be moved around to fit your storage situation, easy to assemble, and relatively easy to find.

What you will need: A simple google search of “industrial shelving” will work if you prefer online shopping (Global Industrial has starter kits that can be added to with different shelving options: <http://www.globalindustrial.com/product/itemKey/30353412>) or visit your local DIY store for shelving units. Once you have your shelving you will need a rubber mallet, 1 ½ inch thick lumber cut to size, ¾ inch plywood the same size as your shelving, 7 millimeter plastic sheeting, and possibly a couple of willing volunteers completes your list.

Budget impact: \$150-\$500 or less. How many starters and additions plus shipping and lumber needs will determine your final cost. This may also be a great grant project if funding is needed (check with the granting organization) or it can be your one major project and expense for that year. If you have a good volunteer base, it would be a great opportunity to have them actively involved and see the kind of impact they can have.



Make sure to wear good protective gloves when assembling the shelving and ear plugs if your ears are sensitive to sharp sounds. We had a few extra end caps and beams that we cleaned, painted, and assembled for our framed objects. We reinforced the shelves with stringers that spanned the width of the shelf to make sure they held up to the collective weight of the objects. Once these were set up we framed out stringers and covered them with ¼ inch ethafoam to create two foot wide units within the larger shelving and lined the bottoms with a smooth white coated board. Make sure you “break” the edges of the board for a soft edge to minimize potential damage to the frames. Depending on the thickness and level of decorations on the frames (I would recommend hanging storage for the fragile or highly decorated frames) you can gently stack your framed objects layered or interweaved with foam padding in the customized shelving. You can arrange by size and for the really small or if a large and a small size wind up next to each other, place a piece of foam core or mat board cut to the size of the larger object between for a sturdy buffer.



For our object shelving, we used both solid and wire racked shelving. You may use this type of shelving at home in your pantry, garage, or room where you need additional storage. For our smaller objects we used wire rack shelves. Why wire rack shelves? It keeps the shelves cleaner and requires less maintenance. You can use a solid shelf but make sure you use foam core as the buffering cover and not ethafoam (same for wire rack shelves). Foam core allows for easy dusting and holds up better under the weight of an object. It also makes it easier to move the object on the shelf. Ethafoam has a tendency to collect and hold dust, compress and break down faster under the weight of an object, and makes it harder to move by forming a mold or well where the object has sunken in. In most cases I try to box everything before placing on the shelves. If the object is too big, heavy, or awkwardly shaped for standard box sizes, I will shelve them unboxed on top of foam core.



For the large or heavy objects, we reinforced the $\frac{3}{4}$ inch plywood shelves with stringers spanning the beams. (I selected the 48 inch deep shelves for more versatility.) Make sure the wood stringers are screwed to the shelf and fit the depth of the inset of your pallet racking beams. I also use unbleached muslin cut to size as a dust cover for each object.



To provide additional dust control, I cover or drape the whole shelving with 7 millimeter plastic sheeting. Similar to gift wrapping a boxed present, you can do the same thing with the shelves but make sure one or both sides are left loose to create a flap/door for easy access. Another approach is to cover with plastic sheeting length wise, secure to frame with packing tape and then drape depth wise securing only at the top to create your access flaps. (Make sure the covering length is only to the bottom shelf to allow for air flow and to avoid collecting dirt from the floor.)



In all cases, when selecting your shelving, check the weight limits and note it on the shelf somewhere visible (ie- "no more than x lbs.") so everyone knows that is the weight capacity of the shelving. Good rule of thumb: better to allow for more weight than you think you'll need than not enough.

Next time: Textile storage

Contributing writer: Michelle Wallace, High Desert Curation, Curator, michellerwallace2018@gmail.com