

## Art District Article on Museo Vault



Museo Vault, located in the Miami's Wynwood Art District, offers full-service art storage facilities to galleries, art dealers and collectors from South Florida and abroad. All images are courtesy of Museo Vault.

By Tracy Kerscher

Biometric thumbprint scanner, mantraps, multimillion-dollar artwork. No, I'm not setting the scene for an episode of the TV series *Burn Notice*-I'm describing Museo Vault, a full-service art storage facility located in Miami.

Plopped in the middle of Wynwood, at 346 NW 29<sup>th</sup> Street, this unassuming building covers 86,000 square feet and plays host to millions of dollars worth of fine art.

The brainchild of David Lombardi, a highly regarded real estate developer in South Florida, the idea for Museo Vault was conceived during Art Basel in December 2006. Lombardi attended a breakfast lecture hosted by AXA Art Insurance Corporation on the trials and tribulations of keeping artwork safe in Miami's tropical and unpredictable climate. "The previous hurricane season [was] very rough, and insurance companies were becoming increasingly nervous as to their real exposure and liability- with collectors keeping their artwork in waterfront homes, susceptible to damage from hurricanes and flooding," explained

Lombardi. Observing a missing link in the art storage industry, Lombardi set out with Tarco Properties to create the first storage facility of its kind, built from the ground up, to the latest and highest specifications of the art insurance industry.



Working closely with Global Risk Partners, an international consulting firm in risk control and loss prevention, Lombardi began the process of planning and designing this facility in 2007. Ground was broken in January, 2008, and just eleven months later, the doors to Museo Vault were open.

Museo Vault is a one-stop shop for museums, galleries, and individual art collectors, providing collection management, conservation, storage, transportation, and handling services.

Through the collection management service, entire catalogs of artwork are inventoried. This includes photographing, measuring, and researching the works of art. Clients can then view their entire collection online at any time. If a client is in need of restoration and conservation services, Museo Vault coordinates with highly skilled conservationists to make any necessary repairs onsite, reducing the risk of any further damage during transportation.

In addition to providing storage space, Museo Vault's experienced staff also provides space customization services. Clients can receive advice on the best ways to safely optimize their private spaces, and have access to Museo Vault's customized mounts, storage cases, and racks.



Trained art handlers are available to transport paintings, sculptures, and other works of art to and from the storage facility. They are also available for on-site installation at galleries, museums, and private residences, as well as for crating, packing, and shipping.

But Museo Vault doesn't stop at providing top-notch services. This \$10 million facility also offers the highest level of security, including cameras that constantly monitor every inch of the building, biometric thumbprint scanning for elevator access, and a 'man-trapped' loading dock. Made to withstand a Category 5 hurricane, Museo Vault was built 18.5 feet above sea level and includes a redundancy system that allows it to continue operating at 100% capacity in the event that outside power sources become unavailable.



Despite having a state-of-the-art, fully equipped building, Lombardi recognized that this was simply not enough to accomplish his goal of making Museo Vault the ultimate art storage experience. He explains, “We set out to find the very best art handlers, and the very best crating and packaging people.” This includes appointing Anthony Malakates, who opened the first art handling company in Miami in 1985, to his dream team as operations manager. “We quickly realized that you can have the finest facility in the world, but if you don’t have the staff, you have nothing.”

During its first year, business for Museo Vault was slow. Lombardi states, “We opened at a terrible time, at the outbreak of the recession.” Nevertheless, understanding the importance of earning the trust of artists and collectors, Lombardi focused on establishing an impeccable reputation among the clients it did have. Through word-of-mouth, satisfied returning customers, and an influx of art fairs, exhibitions, and galleries to recently hit Miami, Museo Vault is doing well now. It continues to grow and offer, as Lombardi describes it, “the highest quality for a reasonable value.”

Museo Vault is located at 346 NW 29<sup>th</sup> Street. Miami, FL 33127.

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