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Five Things You Should Know About The Bo Bartlett Center at Columbus State University, Columbus, Georgia

What is The Bo Bartlett Center?

The Bo Bartlett Center is the most recent addition to the College of the Arts at Columbus State University. Located on the banks of the Chattahoochee River in Columbus, Georgia, on the second level of the Corn Center for the Visual Arts on CSU's downtown RiverPark Campus, this 18,500 square foot, multi-disciplinary learning center is a public/private partnership designed to serve students, faculty, the southwest Georgia community and eco-tourists. The Center is scheduled to open in 20__ and, with generous community support, will be free and open to all visitors.

This vibrant community space will house a permanent collection of many never-before-exhibited paintings and extensive archival holdings of American Realist painter and Columbus-native Bo Bartlett. The Center will archive sketchbooks and ephemera of Bartlett and other living artists to facilitate an ongoing exploration of the creative process. A behind-the-scenes look at artistic thinking, from first sketch to final painting, will be presented online.

The Bartlett Center will serve as a catalyst for arts collaboration across the campus and around the country, with a full scope of exhibitions and programs that will encourage experimentation and bridge art forms: music, dance, theater and fine art.

Who is Bo Bartlett?

Columbus, Georgia, native James “Bo” Bartlett III (b. 1959) is recognized as one of the leading figurative painters of his generation. Standing in an unbroken line of American Realist painters stretching from the 19th century to the present, Bartlett and his contemporaries revitalized the storied tradition of narrative realism that runs from Eakins and Homer through Hopper, Rockwell and the three generations of the Wyeth family.

Bartlett's work reflects his upbringing in a small, southern town where storytelling was an important part of life and tradition. His complex, mural-scale figurative paintings are deeply



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laden with personal history. They invite viewers into the action while drawing upon the strongest elements of storytelling: mythology, legend and wonder. Bartlett's gifts as an artist include illusion, narration and personal connection, imbuing paintings with a magical quality that is also decidedly human.

His work resides in prestigious private collections and has been acquired by Crystal Bridges Museum of American Art, Denver Museum of Art, Santa Barbara Museum of Art and the Seattle Art Museum, among others. Bartlett and his wife, Betsy Eby, live and work in Columbus, Georgia, and Wheaton Island, Maine.

The Space: An Elegant Architectural Frame Bridging Past and Present

The Bo Bartlett Center will be housed in a repurposed, red-brick-faced former cotton warehouse on the RiverPark Campus of Columbus State University. Designed by the Seattle-based firm Olson Kundig Architects, the 18,500 square foot building will feature four galleries with sliding and pivoting walls for dynamic spatial flexibility and adaptability. The building's design, inspired by the interplay of nature, people, culture and imagination, will enhance the Center's relationship to the river and to the enthusiastic university arts community in Columbus, Georgia.

The expansive space will change with the sun and the seasons, illuminated by natural light spilling through clerestory windows running along the spine of the roof. The soaring 23-foot ceilings and massive pivoting walls will provide the perfect backdrop for Bartlett's large scale works, with life-sized figures and mural-scale canvases that range up to 19 feet in length.

Two smaller changing exhibition galleries and a special archival gallery housing the artist's sketchbooks, travel diaries and personal items will provide a diverse range of experiences for visitors, who are invited to find their own free-flowing paths through the sun-drenched, open space. The art in the Bartlett Center will rotate quarterly, offering an ever-evolving engagement of both art and architecture with each visit.

Learning from Living Artists

As a multi-disciplinary institution founded on the art of Bo Bartlett, this creative learning center will bring artists and students together for spring and fall master classes taught by Bo Bartlett and other leading artists from across the world.

As the collection grows, it will celebrate living, working artists by including sketchbooks, journals and archival materials of noteworthy artists in addition to Bartlett. The Center will offer



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a full range of programming and educational outreach featuring the role of art in developing creativity for all.

The Center will also organize a lecture series, film screenings and regular musical concerts. This cross-disciplinary exploration of the artistic process will encourage visitors to access new levels of inspiration, association and problem solving.

Why is the Bo Bartlett Center being built at Columbus State University in Columbus, Georgia?

Bo Bartlett was born and educated in Columbus, Georgia. Growing up near the Chattahoochee River, Bartlett was deeply influenced by his relationship to nature, especially the strong, clear light specific to Columbus, which he feels is among the most beautiful in the world. The deep tradition of southern storytelling also influenced his upbringing and nurtured his creativity.

Bartlett's homecoming honors this connectedness to his formative years. After returning to Columbus in 2000, Bartlett maintains a downtown studio and has participated in numerous community art outreach programs, helping people unlock creativity, imagine possible futures and realize potential.

With a world-renowned music program and vital arts departments, Columbus State University is the ideal setting for The Bo Bartlett Center. The Center's location on the edge of the University's RiverPark campus places it at an important intersection, bringing nature, the campus and the city together.