Kent State University’s (KSU) visual arts programs are finally under one roof. That was the KSU School of Art’s primary goal when it decided to create the institution’s new Center for the Visual Arts (CVA).

By renovating, repurposing and connecting two older adjacent campus structures—a former industrial arts building built in 1950 and a vintage heating plant dating to 1916—KSU’s School of Art was able to centralize all of its programs that were once dispersed across campus into one home.

The result for the CVA is a blend of old and new construction in a 127,900-square-foot facility—twice the length of a football field—that is LEED registered (Leadership in Energy & Environmental Design) and Silver certified for efficiency and sustainability.

New lift services redesigned loading dock

Located on the CVA’s north side is a newly redesigned and reoriented loading dock, complete with a customized brick alcove that houses a Serco SDL Series hydraulic dock lift.

The new loading dock (at nearly seven feet high) and its hydraulic lift replaced an old four-foot-high dock that previously faced south along with a smaller scissor lift. The former loading dock and lift were serviced via an access...
The new lift was intentionally integrated into the new dock structure itself on all three sides and doesn’t sit fully exposed as the old lift did, according to Mike Wasowski, R.A., Project Manager II, Office of the University Architect, KSU.

Turner further added that the lift’s on-board control (a pre-wired NEMA-4X push-button) is a huge improvement over how his previous lift was configured: “Now we can move things on our own if needed, where using the old lift was always a two-person job.”

Turner also stressed that the new loading dock enables the School of Art’s galleries to bring in exhibits from around the country and the world.

“With art collections worth several million dollars, insurance companies won’t cover shows and art handling companies won’t deliver if we can’t follow best practices and properly move objects in and out of our main building,” Turner explained whose CVA Gallery, the largest exhibit space in the building, operates as a small museum.

The lift’s default position is fully extended flush with the loading dock’s surface which serves as an important fall prevention measure. An optional yellow roller curtain covers the exposed lift opening including the lift’s hydraulics and other mechanical features. The curtain also helps keep out the elements and debris to ensure consistently reliable operation.

Wasowski shared Turner’s primary concern about the new dock and its reversed orientation: “I don’t care if you change the direction of the dock, I just need it to work as well as it did before, if not better,” Turner mandated early on before the project started.

All parties involved in the project fully agree that the KSU CVA’s new loading dock and lift have accomplished exactly what was promised and will service the CVA’s needs for decades to come.