

Brenau University Galleries

Gainesville
brenau.edu/discover/galleries

Photograph by Tom Askew



Founded in 1878 as the Georgia Baptist Women's Seminary, the institution was renamed Brenau College in 1900. Brenau had no designated gallery space until 1985, when Dr. John S. Burd became president. Having a strong personal interest in the arts and understanding its value to an academic institution, Dr. Burd inaugurated the Brenau Permanent Art Collection in 1986. That same year, the first dedicated gallery space for the university was created. A small chapel outside the balcony of the historic Pearce Auditorium was converted into the Presidents Gallery.

The first collection entry was a still life painting by renowned American artist William Merritt Chase. Now numbering over 1,500 works, the collection includes drawings, paintings, and sculptures by Eugène Delacroix, Anna Elizabeth Klumpke, Clyde Connell, and William King. The collection also includes a gouache by Amelia Peláez, vegetable-dyed textiles by Alexander Calder, and many Pop art prints by Jasper Johns, Robert Rauschenberg, and Frank Stella. Also included are significant works by Georgia artists, including sculptor Maria Artemis, printmaker and sculptor Beverly Buchanan, painter Lamar Dodd, printmaker Ruth Laxson, and folk artist R.A. Miller. Collection works figure prominently throughout all campus buildings and periodically in thematic exhibitions.

The 1914 Neoclassical-style campus library building was renovated in 1990 to become the Simmons Visual Arts Center, hosting exhibitions of art by students, alumnae, faculty, and nationally and internationally known artists.

Constructed in 2002, the John S. Burd Center for the Performing Arts contains the Leo Castelli Art Gallery. Named in honor of the well-known New York gallery dealer who served as a member of the board of trustees from 1991 until his death in 1999, the gallery became the third exhibition space on Brenau's campus. The institution's relationship with Castelli spawned several exhibitions of Pop artists' works and Pop art donations to the collection. Unique among them is *American Center, Paris* (1994), a print by Augustaborn artist Jasper Johns, donated by the artist in honor of his two maiden aunts, who attended Brenau. Upon receiving the print, then-President John Burd contacted the typically reticent Pop icon in order to learn more about the print's subject matter. The artist's response came in the form of a hand-drawn diagram on tracing paper, identifying all of the major elements in the print—a very rare item.

Brenau University also maintains and exhibits portions of its Historical Clothing and Textile Collections on its Gainesville campus. About twenty smaller collections of clothing, textiles, and accessories accompany three significantly larger collections: the Princess Lucie Shirazi Collection of European couture and one-of-kind garments, the Bette Todd Wages Collection of handmade garments from Northeast Georgia makers and collectors, and the Irvin Little Collection of mid-twentieth-century and juvenile garments.

Mary Beth Looney
Chair, Department of Art and Design
Brenau University