GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY
Office of the Provost
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Dear AASHE STARS Program Staff,

Please accept these comments in support of documenting the Container Space for STARS innovation credit. I write from the perspective of the Provost's Office, but also in the context of my service as a former Associate Dean of the College of Visual and Performing Arts with a strong interest in sustainability issues in the fine and performing arts.

The Container Space is a visible, popular, and successful example of innovative solutions to sustainability in the world of exhibiting visual art. It is located adjacent to George Mason University's School of Art. Professor Tom Ashcraft, a sculptor and environmental artist, along with students and colleagues in the School of Art, converted an old shipping container into "a prototype for a zero-carbon mobile exhibition gallery and community space."

The shipping container is a recycled object itself. The container stood deteriorating in a field for two decades before it was re-purposed, utilizing found and recycled materials from the garbage and the local community. Recycling & sustainability are key conceptual features of the Container Space. Because most shipping containers are made in Korea or China where there historically have been few regulations on what kinds of chemicals can be used inside containers, the students first ripped out all of the original wood and rusty bolts inside.

For the container's interior walls, the students chose a paint containing zero volatile organic compounds. Then the students repurposed used shipping pallets to replace the deteriorated floor, creating what they call "pallet parquet," a floor of unusual beauty entirely sourced from found materials. All of the pallets were retrieved from the trash or donated by local businesses overflowing with pallet stock.

The students then installed custom skylights made from several pieces of recycled frosted glass, which were placed at angles corresponding to the degrees of the Tropic of Cancer and Capricorn. Finally, the Container Space is off-the-grid and powered by a 130 watt solar panel, a deep cycle battery, and lit by two strings of LEDs.

The shipping container formally opened in December 2009 and has hosted numerous art exhibits. For more information, click on http://www.containerspace.org/home/about

Thank you for your consideration.

Rick Davis, DFA
Associate Provost for Undergraduate Education