

Archives and Collections: Collections Development Policy

POLICY DETAILS:

Date of approval	June 2019
Approving body	Museum and Archive Committee
Supersedes	Collections Development Policy November 2017
Date of EIA	
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Responsible Executive Group area	Learning Resources
Related policies and documents	Acquisitions Decision Guide Acquisitions: Transfer of Title Form
Benchmarking	Museum Association Accreditation Scheme

Glasgow School of Art Museum and Archive Collections

Collections Development Policy

Name of museum: Glasgow School of Art

Name of governing body: Board of Governors, Glasgow School of Art

1. Museum's statement of purpose

Glasgow School of Art is committed to: *'managing its fine art, design, architecture and archive collections by means of collecting, preserving, documenting, disseminating and interpreting this material for the benefit of its staff and students and the wider public in line with recognised professional practice'*.

2. An overview of current collections

The Glasgow School of Art's archives and collections include records and artefacts which relate to the School's activities since its foundation in 1845. Holdings include GSA's institutional records, and a number of collections deposited by former staff, students and related organizations. The collections include examples of art, design and architectural work by GSA alumni and former staff. The 250 works by Charles Rennie Mackintosh form a MGS "Recognised Collection" of national significance.

There are over 3500 individual items in the collections plus 100 deposited archive collections, and 25,000 items in the GSA institutional archive. The majority of collections are in physical form (furniture, works on paper, sculpture, textiles, plaster casts, ceramics, metalwork, glass plate negatives) with a small amount of digital archives and collections.

3. Themes and priorities for future collecting

The extent of future acquisitions for the Glasgow School of Art Archives and Collections (as a result of gift, loan, bequest, purchase or exchange) will be restricted to items of a fine art, design or architectural nature. All future acquisitions will relate to either the history or development of teaching at the School, or will consist of work and/or records either produced by, or in the collection of, former staff and students of the School, current staff and students of the School or by individuals or groups directly associated with the School.

This collection development policy is complemented by a collection development plan. This policy ensures that the Glasgow School of Art acts in accordance with nationally agreed standards for museums and archives in the UK with regard to

acquisitions and disposals. The plan will describe an annual process for collecting, including calendar points, agreed areas of focus (taking into account items lost in the 2014 fire) and clear criteria for selection expressed in greater detail that is appropriate for this policy.

4. Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

The Glasgow School of Art recognises that the rationalisation and/or disposal of any item in its collection should only be considered following responsible, curatorially-motivated discussions that address matters pertaining to the museum and archive's long-term collections development strategy, and the public benefit derived from the remaining collections. Consideration should be given to the Museum Association's *Code of Ethics for Museums* and its *Disposals Toolkit* with particular reference to the method of disposal (gift, sale or exchange) or where the disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. In the case of archival material, The National Archives (TNA) guidelines relating to deaccessioning and disposal should be consulted.

5. Limitations on collecting

The museum and archive recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

6. Collecting policies of other museums and archives

The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums, archives, and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources. Specific reference is made to the following museums:

- The University of Glasgow
- Glasgow Life
- National Museums of Scotland
- National Galleries of Scotland
- Historic Environment Scotland
- National Trust for Scotland
- Victoria and Albert Museum

7. Policy review procedure

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above.

Museums Galleries Scotland will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

8. Acquisitions not covered by the policy

Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the governing body of the museum and archive itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

9. Acquisition procedures

- a. The Archives and Collections will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the Archives and Collections can acquire a valid title to the item in question.
- b. In particular, the Archives and Collections will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).
- c. In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, the Archives and Collections will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.
- d. The Archives and Collections will not acquire any biological or geological material.
- e. The Archives and Collections will not acquire any archaeological material.
- f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 9a, 9b, 9c, or 9e will only be because the museum and archive is:
 - acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin

- acquiring an item of minor importance that lacks secure ownership history but in the best judgement of experts in the field concerned has not been illicitly traded
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin
- in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970

In these cases the Archives and Collections will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

- g. The Archives and Collections does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

10. Spoliation

The Archives and Collections will use the statement of principles ‘Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period’, issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

11. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

N/A

12. Management of archives

As the Archives and Collections holds archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom (third edition, 2002) and best practice guidelines from The National Archives (TNA).

12. Documentation of acquisitions

A transfer of title form is completed for all acquisitions received by gift or by sale from external sources. In instances where material is left with the Archives & Collections without donor information, or where the donor cannot be contacted, the Archives and Collections will presume ownership of the material and process it in line with usual procedures: items (including multiple works) that The Glasgow School of Art deems not to be worthy of permanent preservation/ inclusion into the GSA collection/archive shall be disposed of as seen fit by the School.

13. Disposal procedures

Disposal preliminaries

- a. The governing body will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.
- b. By definition, the Archives and Collections has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the Archives and Collections' holdings.
- c. The Archives and Collections will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item and agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account.
- d. When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the Archives and Collections will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

Motivation for disposal and method of disposal

- e. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined in paragraphs 13g-13o will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.
- f. The Archives and Collections will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

The disposal decision-making process

- g. Whether the disposal is motivated either by curatorial or financial reasons, the decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including the public benefit, the implications for material owned by Archives and Collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. External expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the Archives and Collections will also be sought.

Responsibility for disposal decision-making

- h. A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the Archives and Collections acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of an individual staff member of the collection acting alone.

Use of proceeds of sale

- i. Any monies received by the Archives and Collections governing body from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Museum Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from Museums Galleries Scotland.
- j. The proceeds of a sale will be ring-fenced so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of Museum Accreditation standards.

Disposal by gift or sale

- k. Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition, or in the case of archive material, items will be offered to another publically accessible archive repository
- l. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums or Archive Repositories to which it was offered directly as a gift or for sale, then the museum and archive community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through an announcement in the Museums Association's *Museums Journal*, and in other specialist journals or online resources where appropriate.
- m. The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums or Accredited Archive. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

Disposal by exchange

- n. The Archives and Collections will not dispose of items by exchange.

Documenting disposal

- o. Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with SPECTRUM procedure on de-accession and disposal.