

ACQUISITIONS POLICY

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Queensland Art Gallery Board of Trustees

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1. PURPOSE AND SCOPE

This policy presents the rationale and guidelines for the acquisition of artworks for the permanent collection ('the Collection') of the Queensland Art Gallery | Gallery of Modern Art ('the Gallery'). The Collection is a significant cultural asset held in trust by the Gallery, on behalf of the state government, for the people of Queensland.

It provides guidelines on the different means by which acquisitions can be made, and outlines criteria that potential acquisitions must fulfil in order to be approved. Procedures for documenting acquisitions are provided in the Acquisitions Manual, available to Gallery staff involved in the acquisitions process.

This policy is applicable to all staff who recommend the acquisition of artworks by the Gallery, and should be read in conjunction with the Gallery's Strategic Plan 2014–19 and related documents, including the Collection Development Plan. Both of these plans are reviewed annually and redrafted every five years. This policy also serves as a source of information for the public.

This Policy is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure it reflects best and current practice.

2. BACKGROUND

This Acquisitions Policy supports the Gallery's primary objective, as stated in the *Queensland Art Gallery Act 1987*, which is 'to contribute to the cultural, social and intellectual development of all Queenslanders', by providing guidelines to enable the Board to fulfil its function 'to develop the art gallery's collection of works of art' (Div.3, §19).

Artworks proposed for acquisition will further the Gallery's strategic vision: 'to be the leading institution for the contemporary art of Australia, Asia and the Pacific', and its mission 'to engage people with art and artists through memorable and transformative experiences onsite and online' (*QAGOMA Strategic Plan 2014–19*). In recognition of the important role that historical collections play in representing the Gallery's institutional history, as well as the broad potential for learning and enjoyment that they provide Gallery audiences, opportunities to strengthen these areas will continue to be sought (see 3.1).

3. ACQUISITIONS

'Acquisition' means the acceptance, through gift or purchase, of an artwork into the Gallery's Collection.

All artworks proposed for acquisition must further the mission and strategic vision of the Gallery. Proposed acquisitions for the Gallery's Collection must satisfy the following criteria:

- legal title in the artwork can be transferred by the vendor/donor;
- the Gallery's actions regarding the proposed acquisition will be compliant with conventions or legislation addressing the movement of cultural artefacts and the protection of endangered species;

- acquisition of artwork which respects the cultural sensitivities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities;
- that the Gallery can house and care for the proposed acquisition according to generally accepted museum practice;
- the work is in, or capable of being returned to, an acceptable state of preservation. Exceptions are made if the deteriorated physical condition is integral to the meaning of the work, or if the object provides documentary, technical or aesthetic information to support Collection objectives.

Consideration must also be given to the work's ongoing viability as part of a public art collection, including assessment of such factors as:

- the work's potential for future iterations on public display, in terms of conservation and storage requirements, flexible options for future display of large, multi-part artworks (if appropriate to the work and agreed to by the artist) and any financial and logistical considerations relating to its re-installation;
- the presence of any technological elements that may become obsolete and whether these elements can be replaced or upgraded (with the agreement of the artist where applicable).

3.1. Collecting areas

Artworks are acquired to strengthen existing areas of collecting focus, which are outlined in detail in the forthcoming Collection Development Plan (2014-19). Many of these collecting areas have been developed over several decades, while others may be relatively new and reflect the Gallery's current strategic vision. Special opportunities for acquisition may from time to time arise that are not anticipated by the Collection Development Plan. In most respects, these are likely to involve opportunities to acquire exceptional stand-alone artworks or profile collections.

Collecting areas are defined by geography rather than by particular media, and are primarily focused on the following:

Australian Art

The work of Australian artists has been collected by the Queensland Art Gallery since its foundation in 1895. These works date from the colonial period onwards, with particularly rich holdings of paintings and sculptures by leading Australian expatriate artists, such as those living in the United Kingdom and France at the turn of the twentieth century. Strong holdings of postwar art include works by artists with particular connections to Queensland, especially Ian Fairweather. Collecting activity tracks developments in the modern movement of the 1950s and 1960s, including abstractions and assemblages and conceptual/post-object art of the late 1960s and 1970s.

Collecting post 1975 has followed artists working in a wide variety of media, such as installation, photography, film, and digital and electronic media, while continuing to recognise core practices such as painting, sculpture, drawing and printmaking. There is strong representation of ephemeral and time-based art, including performance art and its documentation. The Gallery also has rich holdings of contemporary glass, ceramics, metalwork and jewellery. The collection includes substantial holdings of works by Queensland artists, encompassing all media, both historical and contemporary.

Indigenous Australian Art

The Gallery collects works from all regions of the country, with the rich variety of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and experiences in Queensland being a key focus. Holdings have grown remarkably in recent years, with a strong focus on contemporary art, including paintings, sculpture, printmaking, photography, video and installation, especially from urban-based artists. A special focus is contemporary works from desert communities and there is also a profile collection of works in fibre. This collecting area also includes a group of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century works, with a strong emphasis on Queensland, as well as mid-twentieth century works such as the Hermannsburg School watercolours and bark paintings.

Asian Art

The collecting of Asian art engages with significant developments in the art and culture of Asia today, with a focus on the contemporary period. It is among the most extensive of its kind in the world, comprising over 1000 works from the late 1960s to the present. The Gallery acquires painting, sculpture, installation, video, photography and works on paper by leading artists from East, Southeast, South, Central and West Asia, as well as the Asian diaspora. The Collection has been shaped primarily by the Asia Pacific Triennial of Contemporary Art since 1993, and distinguishes the Gallery nationally and internationally through its depth, range and ambition. Collection strengths include contemporary art from China, Japan and India, as well as art in specific media, such as contemporary porcelain, miniature painting, video art and installation.

A collection of historical Asian works highlights key artistic developments from the Neolithic period to the 20th century, providing insights into the richness of Asian cultural traditions as well as contributing to the interpretation and appreciation of the Gallery's contemporary Asian collection. It also draws attention to the importance of cultural exchange in the development of Asian aesthetics. The Gallery collects painting, printmaking, sculpture, ceramics, textiles, photography and the decorative arts to reflect the diversity of media, faiths and techniques across the region. East Asian art, particularly Japanese art, is a Collection strength, and there are growing holdings in South and Southeast Asian art.

Pacific Art

The Pacific collection covers the geographic areas of New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, the island nations and cultures of the Pacific north to Hawai'i and east to Easter Island, as well as artists from the diaspora. The Gallery focuses on the period post-1970, acquiring key works in all media to reflect the diversity of contemporary Pacific art, including innovation in customary practices. Particular strengths include contemporary art from New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Vanuatu, as well as textiles, photography and body adornment.

International Art

'International Art' is broadly used by the Gallery to refer to art from parts of the world other than Asia, Australia and the Pacific. For works made before 1975 – which represent the historic core of the Gallery's collection – this encompasses primarily Western Europe and North America. The Gallery's historical international art collection spans approximately five centuries, from the early Renaissance to the second half of the twentieth century. European painting, sculpture, prints and drawings constitute the majority of the over 2000 works in this area, and approximately half the works are British.

For post 1975, and notwithstanding the Gallery's strategic focus on the contemporary art of Australia, Asia and the Pacific, acquisitions will not be limited to particular geographical areas, but reflect the expanding field of contemporary art. Acquisitions which may be considered include:

- works from artists who are recognised as defining and influential figures in late twentieth century and early twenty-first-century art.
- significant works by artists who are recognised as pioneering new directions in contemporary art practice.

The Gallery considers artworks in any media for acquisition across all collecting areas, as relevant, from painting, drawing and sculpture through to film, video and new media. The Gallery's Australian Cinémathèque — the only facility in Australia to specialise in the presentation and collecting of film within an art museum environment — actively researches, proposes and assesses films (16mm and 35mm) for acquisition. These acquisitions reflect the areas of collecting focus outlined in the Collection Development Plan.

3.2. Means of acquisition

Artworks can be acquired for the Collection via two main channels — purchase or gift:

Purchase

Artworks can be purchased directly from dealers, agents, artists and collectors, or can be purchased at auction. Purchases are most commonly acquired with funds provided by the QAGOMA Foundation.

Gift

More than one-third of the Gallery's Collection has been acquired as a result of donations. These can be received through the QAGOMA Foundation and acknowledged at the appropriate Foundation membership level based on the value of the artwork at the time of donation.

The gift of an artwork can be made in three ways: as a direct donation; as a donation through the Cultural Gifts Program; or as a bequest.

The Cultural Gifts Program (CGP) is a Commonwealth Government initiative that is recognised as an incentive to private collectors to consider donating works to public institutions. Gallery staff can provide assistance to potential donors in organising valuations and liaising with the administrators of the Cultural Gifts Program.

By bequeathing artworks, financial assistance or property to the Gallery, benefactors can directly contribute to the expansion and development of the Gallery's Collection. Bequests to the Gallery are managed through the QAGOMA Foundation.

The Gallery recommends to all prospective donors that they seek personal legal and financial advice in matters relating to their gifts and the resulting tax and estate planning consequences.

The Gallery reserves the right to decline a proposed gift if the artwork does not further the vision outlined in its Strategic Plan and the collecting priorities that are provided in the Collection Development Plan. On occasion the Gallery may accept an object donated by bequest but which is not deemed appropriate for retention in the Collection. Procedures for managing such works are detailed in the Deaccessioning Policy.

3.3. Managing conflicts of interest

Where there is a conflict of interest, perceived or declared, in the offering and acceptance of a gift, the issue shall be referred to the Queensland Art Gallery Board of Trustees for final consideration. The Board is proactive in managing conflict of interest and perception of conflict of interest, including where it concerns its own membership. For further information regarding conflicts of interest among members of Government Boards, see the Office of the Queensland Integrity Commissioner's *Statutory Office Holders & Conflicts of Interests - Information Sheet No. 3*, available at www.integrity.qld.gov.au <<http://www.integrity.qld.gov.au/>.

Under the Code of Conduct for the Queensland Public Service, all Gallery staff are obliged to disclose a personal interest that could, now or in the future, be seen as influencing the performance of their duties.

3.4. Provenance

'Provenance' refers to the history of ownership of an artwork. Artworks will only be acquired for the Collection in circumstances where the Gallery has verification that legal title in the artwork can be transferred by the vendor or donor, and where the Gallery's actions would be compliant with conventions or legislation addressing the movement of cultural artefacts.

Artworks will not be acquired through purchase or accepted as gift in cases where there is any knowledge or reason to believe that the artwork was stolen or sold under duress.

The Gallery observes the UNESCO *Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property 1970*, to which Australia is a signatory. The Gallery follows stringent procedures to establish detailed provenance documentation and proof of ownership and origin, adhering to Australian and international museum best practice, including Museums Australia's *Code of Ethics for Art, History & Science Museums* and the ICOM *Code of Ethics for Museums*, as well as consulting lost and stolen art registers and local organisations where appropriate.

The Gallery maintains an online register of artworks of European origin that may have gaps in their provenance records, or vague or inaccurate information about their ownership during the World War Two era (1933–46).

4. DEACCESSIONING

Deaccessioning is a legitimate collection management activity that refers to the formal adjustment of records to reflect the removal of an artwork from the Gallery's Collection. The Gallery observes international standards for museums with regard to deaccessioning and the disposal of artworks, such as those outlined in the *Code of Ethics* published by both ICOM and Museums Australia.

Deaccessioning is considered when an artwork ceases to be of relevance and significance to the Collection; when the Gallery is unable to appropriately utilise and care for it; or in response to a legitimate claim for the repatriation or restitution of an artwork.

The Gallery does not endorse the use of collections as a financial resource nor the application of funds derived from deaccessioning to any museum activity other than those which directly improve the Collection, for example through the acquisition or conservation of artworks.

More information regarding deaccessioning and disposal procedures is contained in the Gallery's Deaccessioning Policy.

5. AUTHORITY AND DELEGATION

The Director, as representative of the Board, oversees the control, management and maintenance of the Gallery and its property, including the Collection (See *The Queensland Art Gallery Act 1987*, Div.3, §19).

The Director has delegation to acquire artworks for the Gallery up to a financial value determined by the Board of Trustees. In exceptional cases, curators are given licence to purchase directly in the field when conducting research trips in remote communities, such as those in Indigenous Australia or the Pacific region. The maximum value of any such purchases will be determined by the Director and the Deputy Director, Curatorial and Collection Development, and will be within the Director's own delegation limit.