

## UNIVERSITY ART COLLECTIONS DEVELOPMENT POLICY

**Name of governing body:** Council of the University of Reading, Collections Governance Committee

**Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:** 30 January 2024

**Policy availability:** A copy of this policy is available to all members of the public via our website and on request in our Art Collection Study Room.

**Policy review procedure:** The Collections Development Policy is reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that any changes affecting the collections are taken into account. This process occurs at least once every five years.

**Date at which this policy is due for review:** 30 January 2029

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### Introduction

The purpose of this Collections Development Policy is to provide a framework for the maintenance and development of the University Art Collection, to agree priorities, and to promote consistency in future decision-making. It is noted that all collection management issues will be subject to external constraints of funding and accommodation.

For the purposes of this policy, the scope of the University Art Collections is outlined under the Overview of Current Collections section. This includes commissioned, bought and donated art works that have been accessioned into the collections subject to meeting criteria and priorities set out under

the Themes and Priorities for Future Collecting section and for all future acquisitions in accordance with the procedures set out in Acquisitions section.

The Collections Governance Committee will be notified of any changes to this Policy and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

## Statement of Purpose

The University Art Collection exists to collect, care for, interpret and make works of art publicly accessible as a resource for teaching, research, exhibition and enjoyment, whilst also enriching the University campuses for students, staff, and the general public.

We are committed to promoting inclusivity by offering and delivering a range of opportunities for people to engage with art and participate in a variety of activities using our collections.

## Aim

To manage and develop the University Art Collection to create a significant resource that promotes the place of art within the University's physical, social and academic environment.

## Objectives

- To develop a key resource for teaching, learning and research that offers academics, students, University staff and the wider public the chance to access, experience and work with the collection.
- To produce displays, exhibitions and other forms of interpretation, both physical and digital, that provide opportunities for meaningful engagement with the art collection.
- To develop and/or manage new acquisitions that contribute to the character and history of the university, embracing learning and research (in co-ordination with academic departments and University stakeholders where applicable).
- To manage, and minimize the risks associated with the storage and display of collections, ensuring the highest possible standards of professional stewardship.

## History of the Collection

The University of Reading's approach to collecting artworks, as is common to many university art collections, has not historically been conducted as part of a formal acquisitions programme. The resulting art collections, often amassed under the aegis of individual departments, are an idiosyncratic mix of benefaction and intermittent acquisition and purchase initiatives.

The most important of these initiatives involved the development of significant areas of the collection including:

- The **Betts Collection**: a substantial amount of which were bought at auction and/or collected by Professor J. A. Betts in the 1950s and 1960s. This became a core teaching collection in the Department of Fine Art and was comprised of drawings by old and contemporary masters. Betts also acquired drawings for his personal collection, which makes up the remainder of the Betts Collection. These works were purchased by the University in 1994 from Betts' son, Paul Betts.
- The **Historic Picture Loan Scheme (PLS)**: this was set up in c.1965 and ran until c.2013. The Scheme, which was administered by the Department of Fine Art, bought and collected

artworks for display across the University. The individual departments would then pay a nominal fee to borrow specific works to enhance their buildings.

The process of defining all university-owned art as a single collection under the central management of the University Museums and Special Collection Services (UMASCS) began in 2015 with the appointment of a University Art Curator. Before this appointment the individual collections had been predominantly managed by members of staff in the Department of Fine Art and the Department of History of Art (now closed).

## Overview of Current Collections

The University of Reading's rich and eclectic art collection comprises around 1200 works of painting, sculpture and graphic art, including many pieces of national and international significance. The earliest works date to the 1600s, however most of the collection dates from the 1800s to the present day.

The main art collections are made up of a series of distinct parts reflecting the history and development of the University. These include:

- a variety of work commissioned, bought and given to the University. This includes past students and professors of the University, along with pieces by more prominent 20th century artists such as Alan Lowndes, John Randall Bratby, Leon Kossoff and Max Weber.
- the **Historic Picture Loan Scheme** of paintings and works on paper collected by the Fine Art Department for loan to university patrons. The Scheme includes important examples of printmaking practice by artists such as Charles Tunnicliffe, Stanley Anderson and Lynn Chadwick.
- the **Betts Collection**, which was collected by and associated with the University's first Professor of Fine Art, Anthony Betts. This Collection comprises an important group of master drawings by artists including Peter Paul Rubens, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Spencer Frederick Gore and Walter Sickert.
- the **Minnie Jane Hardman Collection**, which contains approximately 125 drawings and watercolours documenting the experience and practice of Minnie Jane Hardman (née Shubrook) during her time as a female student in the Royal Academy Schools during the late nineteenth century.

Within the wider context of UK University Art Collections, the University of Reading holds distinguished collections of considerable strength, depth and variety.

## Themes and Priorities for Future Collecting

The principle focus of collecting remains artworks that relate to and enhance the existing art collections, their subject categories, and object types. The following areas have been identified as key priorities for collection development:

- **Old Master Drawings,**
  - Particularly by those artists already represented within the University Art Collection;
  - Particularly those with provenance connected to James Anthony Betts (1897-1980) or the University of Reading School of Art.
- **Modern British Drawings,**
  - Particularly by those artists already represented within the University Art Collection;

- Particularly those with provenance connected to James Anthony Betts (1897-1980) or the University of Reading School of Art.
- **Modern and Contemporary Prints,**
  - Particularly by those artists already represented within the University Art Collection;
  - Particularly by notable University of Reading students, staff and alumni;
  - Particularly artists who identify as BAME or LGBTQIA+, disabled artists, and women artists.
- **Drawings and prints by the Camden Town Group of Artists**
  - Particularly women artists associated with the movement, who are not currently represented;
- **Drawings by Minnie Jane Hardman (1862-1952)**
  - Particularly artwork created after 1889, when she finished her studies at the Royal Academy of Arts.
- **Drawings and prints by Walter Sickert (1860-1942)**
  - Particularly relating to Sickert's period of activity c1900-1920.
- **Paintings, drawings and prints made by Max Weber (1881-1961)**
  - Particularly relating to the New York period 1912-1916.
- **Artwork created by notable University of Reading students, staff and alumni**
  - Paper remains the central material focus, but this also encompasses oil paintings, sculpture and born-digital artworks;
  - Particularly artists who identify as BAME or LGBTQIA+, disabled artists, and women artists.
- **Portraits of notable University of Reading students, staff and alumni**
  - Ambitions include a desire to acquire where there are key gaps in our holdings, particularly the representation of BAME sitters, LGBTQIA+ sitters, sitters with disabilities, and women.

## Themes and Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal

The University Art Collection recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

Artworks from the University Art Collection may be considered for deaccession from the permanent collection based on one or more of the following criteria:

- irreparable damage or poor condition
- little or no monetary or historical value
- inferior quality
- inability to meet standards of care or storage requirements
- questionable authenticity, attribution or provenance
- duplication
- political and legal concerns

## **Legal and Ethical Framework for Acquisition and Disposal of Items**

The University Art Collection recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when considering acquisition and disposal.

## **Collecting Policies of other Museums/Institutions**

The University Art Collection will work in co-operation with other institutions and repositories collecting the same or related areas or subject fields. The Collection will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialism, to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

When advising potential donors, the University Art Collection will draw attention to the existence of other public museums and collections with similar or overlapping interests and ensure the material is offered to the most appropriate institution, while respecting the donor's own wishes.

Specific reference is made to the following departments, museums, and institutions:

- University of Reading's Department of Art
- University of Reading's Department of Typography and Graphic Communication
- University of Reading's Special Collections
- University of Reading's Museum of English Rural Life
- Reading Museum and Art Gallery

## **Acquisition**

Responsibility for selection of individual items recommended for acquisition will be made by the Curator, in co-ordination with academic/professional staff where appropriate. If necessary, advice and recommendations will be sought from UMASCS staff and other interested parties and submitted to the appropriate University committee or authority for consideration. Submissions will only be made for artworks/ collections that can be properly conserved, housed and maintained.

Approval for acquisitions will be sought from the Collections Governance Committee which acts on behalf of the Council of the University.

All new acquisitions will be reported to the University's Insurance Office in order that an assessment can be made of insurance requirements.

The Collections Governance Committee has responsibility for: *"decisions in relation to proposed acquisitions and disposals of a routine nature, in accordance with Collections Development policies, and taking into account relevant expert advice."*

The University Art Collection will undertake due diligence so not to acquire any item unless it is satisfied that the item 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.

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, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the University Art Collection will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The University 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.

Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.

### **Methods of Acquisition**

All acquisitions will be made according to the criteria set out in this Collections Development Policy.

Approved methods of acquisition include:

- Purchase: artworks may be purchased with university funds or funds donated to the university for this purpose.
- Bequest or gift: all proposals for bequests or donations of artworks should be referred to the Curator. If accepted, the donor or executor will be required to sign a deposit agreement.
- Commission: artworks may enter the collection that have been created for the University in exchange for payment.

### **Funding**

The University Art Collection is primarily funded by the University of Reading and does not, at present, have a budget that allows for the systematic development of the collection. In the case of particular acquisitions, external funding can be sought from individuals and grant-giving bodies. Works may also be acquired through project-funding as permanent or non-permanent site-specific installations for University buildings.

### **Commissioning**

The University of Reading occasionally commissions artworks. The commissioning of art should contribute as fully as possible to the University's strategies for teaching, research, and cultural engagement.

The University of Reading embraces a broad definition of 'art' which includes, but is not limited to: painting; drawing; print; sculpture; installation; performance art and digital art. Commissions can follow three main processes for selecting an artist:

1. A detailed commission brief is drawn up, and a carefully researched longlist of artists is drawn up;
2. A 'Call-Out for Expressions of Interest' is made. Artists are invited to submit a proposal, and the selection panel shortlists artists following agreed criteria;
3. A direct invitation is made to an artist following advice and research from the University Art Curator.

All commissions need a clear, researched brief that is open enough for artists to respond to creatively. All commissions are decided upon internally and taken to Collections Governance Committee for approval. In the case of commissions that are externally funded, these are decided upon in consultation with the relevant funding organisation before being taken to Collections

Governance Committee for approval. The University Art Curator can fulfil the role of Project Manager, unless external funds permit an individual to be appointed externally.

It is important to note that a commission can normally take anything from 12 months to 3 years to initiate, develop and deliver.

### **Public Art**

As part of the wider University Arts Strategy, the University of Reading also commissions Public Art. For more information please see the 'University of Reading Public Art Strategy'.

### **Human Remains**

The University Art Collection does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

### **Biological and Geological Material**

The University Art Collection will not acquire any biological or geological material

### **Archaeological Material**

The University Art Collection will not acquire any archaeological material

### **Exceptions**

Any exceptions to the acquisition of human remains, biological and geological material, or archaeological material will only be because the University Art Collection is:

- Acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origins
- Acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases the University Art Collection will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. The University Art Collection will document when these exceptions occur.

### **Spoliation**

The University Art Collection 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

### **Disposal**

All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures and the **Documentation Procedural Manual**. The University Art Collection will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons, and any agreements on disposal, made on arrival with donors/depositors, will also be taken into account.

Items for disposal will be determined by the Curator using professional judgement with reference to the criteria outlined under the Themes and Priorities for Rationalisation and Disposal section of this Policy.

In cases where the proposed disposal is an original artwork of established commercial value, it will be presented with a full justification to the Collections Governance Committee by the Curator. The justification will contain explanation of criteria for the disposal, the public benefit, and the implications

for the Collection. The Collections Governance Committee will make the final decision to dispose of material from the collection acting on the advice of the Curator, and can confirm if the University Art Collection is legally free to dispose of an item.

Where appropriate, stakeholders such as University faculty, staff, external experts and donors who may hold an interest in artworks proposed for deaccessioning, and a declaration of the intention for disposal, will also be consulted during this process.

Furthermore, when disposal of an item is being considered, the University Art Collection 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 items is disposed of by sale.

The method of disposal may be by gift, sale, exchange, or destruction. Priority will be given to retaining any disposed item within the public domain.

The item will be offered:

1. By gift or sale directly to any institutions in the public domain likely to be interested in its acquisition and best placed to care for it in the long-term.
2. By gift or sale via the Museum Association's website and Museums Journal and/or in other specialist publications and websites. A period of at least three months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed.

Any monies received by the University from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the University Art Collection. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed 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 the Arts Council England.

The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.

Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and, where appropriate, proper arrangements will be made for the preservation and/or transfer of all the documentation relating to the items concerned in accordance with the SPECTRUM Procedure on Deaccession and Disposal.

### **Disposal by Exchange**

The University Art Collection will not dispose of items by exchange.

### **Disposal by Destruction**

If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the University Art Collection may decide to destroy it, with permission from the Collections Governance Committee.

It is only acceptable to display material of low intrinsic significance (e.g. duplicate mass-produced items or common items which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an item is in extremely poor condition or has high associated health and safety risks.



Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and Safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff, including the University Art Collection and Conservation Teams, where required.

The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of staff. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object file.