

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:

Date at which this policy is due for renewal:

1. Introduction and History of the Art Collection

- 1.1 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.
- 1.2 The process of defining 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. This appointment highlighted the need to formalise a collections development policy (CDP) to bring the art collection into line with other collections managed under UMASCS.
- 1.3 For the purposes of this policy, the scope of the Art Collections is outlined under section 2, specifically the categories of collection set out under 2.2. This includes commissioned, bought and donated art works that have been accessioned into the collections subject to meeting criteria and priorities set out under section 4 and for all future acquisitions in accordance with the procedures set out in section 9.
- 1.4 The purpose of this CDP is to provide a framework for the maintenance and development of the Art Collection, to agree priorities and to promote consistency in future decisions. It is noted that all collection management issues will be subject to external constraints of funding and accommodation.
- 1.5 The Art Collections CDP should be read as a collection management statement in conjunction with the *University of Reading Policy and Strategy for Archives and Collections* and broader University strategy as defined by the Visual Arts Strategy Group (including the Public Art Policy currently in development).
- 1.6 The Art Collections CDP will be reviewed on a regular basis to ensure that any changes affecting the collections are taken into account. The reviewed policy will be reported to the Collections Governance Committee (CGC).

2. Overview of the Art Collection

- 2.1 The University of Reading's rich and eclectic art collection comprises around 1000 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.

- 2.2 The main art collections are made up of a series of distinct parts reflecting the history and development of the University. The **University Art Collection** contains a variety of work commissioned, bought and given to the University, including that of past students and professors and examples by 20th century artists 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 includes important examples of printmaking practice by artists such as Charles Tunnicliffe, Stanley Anderson and Lynn Chadwick. The **Betts Collection and Archive**, collected by and associated with the University's first Professor of Fine Art, Anthony Betts, comprises an important group of master drawings by artists including Peter Paul Rubens, James Abbott McNeill Whistler, Frederick Spencer Gore and Walter Sickert. The **Minnie Jane Hardman Collection** contains approximately 125 drawings and watercolours documenting the artist's experience and practice as a female student in the Royal Academy Schools during the late Victorian era.
- 2.3 Within the wider context of UK University Art Collections, the University of Reading holds distinguished collections of considerable strength, depth and variety.

3. Purpose, Aims and Objectives

3.1 Statement of Purpose

The Art Collection at the University of Reading exists to collect, care for, interpret and make accessible works of art as a significant resource for teaching, research and exhibition, whilst also increasing the enjoyment and enrichment of the University environment for staff, students and the general public.

3.2 Aim

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

3.3 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

4. Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1 The University's art collections are rich and varied and the Art Collection will continue to accept deposits that relate to and enhance the existing collections. Among the strengths for collection development are:

- Master drawings; in particular related to the theme of art education
- The work of Walter Sickert and the Camden Town Group
- The work of notable University of Reading students, staff and alumni
- Portraits of notable University of Reading students, staff and alumni; in particular related to under-represented groups (women, ethnic minorities, members of the LGBTQ community, people with disabilities)
- British Modernism
- The work of Max Weber and American Cubism
- Victorian art
- Fine art prints; in particular artists' proofs and works that articulate key developments in print-making practice

4.2 Artworks may also be acquired through project-funding for the enhancement of the University Campus, for aesthetic reasons and in coordination with strategic goals.

4.3 Due consideration will also be given to prospective acquisitions falling outside of existing strengths, *which can be shown to underpin current or potential research activity and/or to inform teaching and learning practice in response to University need.*

4.4 All artworks accepted into the collection must:

- Be in a condition suitable for exhibition relative to age
- Meet a standard of quality judged based on artistic merit; the wider context of an artist's production; the substance of the artwork
- Be deemed authentic by the Curator, in consultation with external experts where appropriate
- Be an original work
- Be of known provenance

5. Themes and priorities for rationalization and disposal

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

Works from the historical picture loan scheme, of inferior quality, often by past students and including a number of commercial reproductions are being actively rationalized by the Curator of Art Collections and the Art Collections Officer.

6. Collecting policies of other museums/institutions

The University Art Collection will work in co-operation with other institutions and repositories, and will guide prospective donors to the most appropriate repository or institution while respecting the donor's own wishes. When advising potential donors, the Art Collection will draw attention to the existence of other public museums and collections with similar or overlapping interests, to ensure the material is offered to the most appropriate institution.

7. Methods of acquisition

All acquisitions will be made according to the criteria set out in this document and the *University of Reading Policy and Strategy for Archives and Collections*. Methods 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.
- **Deposit/Long term loan:** works from private or public collections kept on display or in storage at the University for a defined or un-defined period, which the University does not own.

8. Funding

The 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.

9. Selection policy and procedure for acquisitions

- 9.1 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.
- 9.2 Approval for acquisitions will be sought from the CGC which acts on behalf of the Council of the University.
- 9.3 All new acquisitions will be reported to the University Insurance Officer in order that an assessment can be made of insurance requirements

- 9.4 The CGC 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.”

For non-routine acquisitions and disposals, the CGC will:
“inform the Collections Strategy Committee of the governance issues such that the Collections Strategy Committee can make the decision.”

10. Disposal procedure

- 10.1 Artworks for disposal will be determined by the Curator using professional judgement with reference to the criteria outlined in item 5 of this document. 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 be consulted.
- 10.2 In cases where the proposed disposal is an original artwork of established commercial value, it will be presented with a full justification to the CGC by the Curator. The justification will contain explanation of criteria for the disposal, and demonstrate appropriate consultation with stakeholders.
- 10.3 Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposal and, where appropriate, reference will be made to SPECTRUM Primary Procedures. The method of disposal may be by gift, exchange, sale or destruction. Disposal shall not serve as a means for generating operating funds for the Art Collection or University.
- 10.4 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the SPECTRUM Primary Procedures on disposal.