

**WHITNEY**



**COLLECTIONS  
MANAGEMENT  
POLICY**

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# Introduction

Professional museum management requires a written collection policy and clear guidelines for its implementation. This document has been developed by the staff of the Whitney Museum of American Art (the Whitney), with the encouragement of the Board of Trustees, to fulfill this need and to serve as a comprehensive governing code. This is a statement of the Whitney's professional standards regarding proper management of its Collection, works considered for acquisition, deaccession, objects borrowed for exhibition, and works loaned to other institutions.

An adequate number of qualified staff is essential to effectively implement this policy and maintain professional standards for the preservation of the Permanent Collection and borrowed objects. This document addresses all aspects of collections management, including the acquisition, use, and proper care of all objects in the Whitney, and the incoming and outgoing loan of objects for exhibitions. Moreover, because policies can become outdated or require modification, procedures for updating this document are also included.

The ultimate responsibility for the Permanent Collection rests with the Museum's Director and Board of Trustees. The Associate Director for Exhibitions and Collections Management, the Senior Registrars and the curators share responsibility for overseeing the implementation of the policies. However, in order to be effective, the Museum's entire professional staff must adhere to the policy's principles and practices.

The principles embodied herein encompass the following objectives:

- To ensure that objects acquired fulfill the Whitney's collection mission and goals.
- To serve as a guide to the prudent acquisition of objects and ensure that specific acquisition standards are met.
- To guide those making decisions concerning the Collection's growth, decisions which may involve professional, ethical, or legal considerations;
- To acknowledge the Whitney's external accountability to the museum profession, to the public, and to the law.
- To protect the Collection, Board, and staff from personal, professional, and political pressures regarding the acquisition, care, and use of objects in the Whitney's custody;
- To ensure maintenance of the requisite internal communication, accountability, and continuity between current and future staff members.
- To advance conservation and care of the collection.
- To encourage and facilitate scholarship on the collection to both internal and external scholars.
- To ensure accurate, current, and ongoing documentation of the collection.

# Mission And Collections Statements

## **Mission [Adopted by the Board of Trustees on October 19, 2005]**

The Whitney seeks to be the defining museum of 20<sup>th</sup>- and 21<sup>st</sup>-century American art. The Museum collects, exhibits, preserves, researches, and interprets art of the United States in the broadest global, historical and interdisciplinary contexts. As the preeminent advocate for American art, we foster the work of living artists at critical moments in their careers. The Whitney educates a diverse public through direct interaction with artists, often before their work has achieved general acceptance.

## **Collecting Philosophy and Goals**

### Contents of the Collection

The Whitney collects outstanding examples of twentieth-century and twenty-first century American art, in the areas of painting, sculpture, prints, drawings, photography, film, video, installations, and new media art.

At present the Whitney does not collect in the areas of architecture, design, and crafts, although it may choose to expand its purview at any time deemed appropriate by the Director and curatorial staff, with Board approval. In the event of such a change, this collection policy must be amended. From time to time, the Museum may exhibit works pertaining to other media.

The Whitney does not ordinarily collect pre-twentieth-century art, unless a particular work is by an artist whose primary contribution has been to twentieth-century art. Such determinations will be made on a case-by-case basis by the presenting curator, in consultation with the Director and the curatorial staff.

### Collecting Methods

In order to retain its position as the preeminent museum of American art, the Whitney must spare no effort in raising funds, discovering new sources of support, and cultivating gifts for the Permanent Collection.

Acquisitions must be made in a thorough manner. Even though the availability of objects can be unpredictable, and occasionally the Director, the curators, and the Registration staff must act quickly to take advantage of unexpected, short-lived opportunities to acquire important works, established policy and procedures must be followed.

As the primary manifestation of our artistic mission, the Permanent Collection provides the foundation for all of the Museum's public programs, including exhibitions and education. For this reason, in the context of loan exhibitions, examples from the Permanent Collection should, whenever possible, be given the highest exhibition priority.

The Museum must periodically assess the status of its holdings to identify gaps and areas for growth, as it must regularly reassess its collecting priorities.

### The Importance of Conservation

The Museum's aggressive and innovative approach to collecting must never overwhelm its ability to care for the objects already in its possession. For this reason, the facilities for protection and storage of the Collection should be constantly monitored, reviewed, and, when necessary, upgraded and improved. Conservation treatment funding must meet Collections needs.

## **Committee on Collections**

### Definition

The Committee on Collections is chaired by an appointee of the President of the Board of Trustees and consists of the chairpersons of all Trustee-appointed acquisition committees, the Director, and other Board members or other individuals deemed appropriate by the President and the Director. The Associate Director for Exhibitions and Collections Management, the Associate Director for Conservation and Research, the Legal Officer, and the Associate Curator for the Permanent Collection attend meetings of this Committee.

### Procedure

The Committee on Collections has oversight and responsibility over certain administrative and procedural aspects of the permanent collection; votes on works proposed for deaccessioning and permanent joint ownership; periodically reviews the collection policy; recommends changes in the structure, policy, or procedures of existing Trustee-appointed acquisition committees; and proposes the creation of new acquisition committees. It also brings issues affecting the Permanent Collection before the Board of Trustees. The Committee on Collections meets at least two times each fiscal year and as needed. Committee votes are subject to the rules stated in the Whitney By-laws.

# Acquisitions

## Acquisition Committees

The overall responsibility for managing the acquisition program rests with the Director of the Museum. Responsibility for overseeing the acquisitions process is shared by the proposing curator, and the Head Registrar, in accordance with policies and procedures set forth in this document.

The Whitney maintains six acquisition committees: a Curatorial Committee, which votes on gifts, partial and promised gifts, bequests, exchanges, and purchases (made with restricted acquisition funds); and five Trustee-appointed acquisition committees which vote on purchases using committee-donated funds.

All acquisitions must be voted on and approved by one of these committees. The curators, Director, Trustees, and acquisition committee members may not independently commit the Museum to either purchasing a work or receiving a donation. Final commitment to acquire is secured only through acquisition-committee vote. Purchase or gift agreements cannot be concluded before that time. The acquisition committees have sole authority to apply funds toward the purchase of any work of art. It is the Director's responsibility to implement the committees' actions and policies. All works approved for inclusion in the Permanent Collection must be submitted as a list by the Collections Department to the Board of Trustees and ratified at their next meeting. Ratification by the Board of Trustees constitutes the final acceptance into the Whitney Collection. Thereafter accession numbers will be assigned to each new work. A list of works with accession numbers assigned will be submitted at the following meeting as an addendum to the minutes of the previous meeting.

When it is impossible to present before the full Curatorial Committee a work offered as a gift (e.g., end-of-the-year gifts), the Director has discretionary authority to approve gifts, in consultation with a temporary committee composed of presenting curator, other available curators, a conservator, and the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection. In addition, to qualify as a year-end gift, a signed Deed of Gift must be in hand by December 31 and the work must be at the Museum or in the hands of the Museum's agent, with the exception of partial or promised gifts.

All Whitney curators are involved in defining collecting priorities, proposing works for the Curatorial Committee, and selecting works for consideration by the appropriate Trustee-appointed acquisition committee. The curators and the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection oversee the acquisition activities of the Curatorial Committee. One curator is assigned each year by the Director to work with the chairperson of each Trustee-appointed committee and coordinate that committee's activities.

According to the Whitney's By-laws, "The presence of one-half of all of the members of the committee shall constitute a quorum, and the vote of a majority of the members present shall constitute the action of the committee. No member of any committee may attend or vote by proxy." These voting rules also govern the Curatorial Committee. In accordance with the By-laws, at meetings of the acquisition committees where a quorum is not present, the chairman of these committees may, at their discretion, waive the quorum requirement. No member of any committee may attend or vote by proxy.

## Curatorial Committee

The Curatorial Committee is a forum for discussion of all curatorial issues. One of its specific purposes is to vote on all gifts, bequests, deaccessions, exchanges, and purchases made with specially raised and restricted acquisition funds (e.g., Katherine Schmidt Shubert Fund).



### Definition

The Curatorial Committee consists of all permanent staff members bearing the title curator, associate curator, and the Associate Director of Conservation and Research. It also includes the Director. The Committee is chaired by the Director who may designate a curator to chair the Committee in his/her absence. The Director may invite advisory members to attend meetings of the Curatorial Committee.

### Procedure

The Director, any curator or any associate curator may propose a work for acquisition to the Curatorial Committee, using the Proposal for Acquisition form. The Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection will assure that the work is on premises or in the Museum's control, and thereafter will submit a list for approval at the next curatorial meeting. The Conservation Department will examine most proposed acquisitions prior to their shipment to the Museum and presentation to the Curatorial Committee. The list will be annotated when specific works present concerns including but not limited to high value, unusual storage costs or conservation considerations.

Once per year, at meetings of the Curatorial Committee, each curator will present highlights of all acquisitions acquired in the previous 6 months by their acquisitions committees.

## **Trustee-Appointed Acquisition Committees**

### Definition

The Whitney maintains standing acquisition committees, each chaired by a member of a Board of Trustees. Currently, there are six Trustee-appointed acquisition committees:

- Painting and Sculpture
- Drawings
- Prints
- Photography
- Film and Video

The acquisition committees do not have a fixed number of members. However, each member is expected to make a predetermined minimum annual contribution (with the exception of members of the artistic or academic community).

Prospective committee members may be proposed to the Director by the committee chairperson, existing committee members, and the curators. Committee members need not be Trustees. They are selected for their interest in twentieth-century and twenty-first century American art and their interest in supporting the Whitney in helping to build the Permanent Collection.

The chairpersons are appointed by the President of the Board, with the approval of the Board of Trustees. The Chairpersons are elected to serve three-year terms, renewable by the Museum's President, with the approval of the Board of Trustees.

Minimum annual contributions for membership are determined by each committee.

### Procedure

The Committee chairperson is responsible for chairing three meetings each fiscal year. He or she meets periodically with the appointed curator to determine the agenda and the list of proposed acquisitions for each meeting. The appointed curator or another curator should complete Proposal for Acquisition and Acquisition Justification prior to each meeting. The sponsoring curator also presents works to the committee or arranges for other curators to make presentations. The committee may discuss the works

at any time during the meeting. However, voting does not take place until after all works have been presented. This gives committee members the opportunity to prioritize their choices in relation to the total funds available.

The Director may propose to one committee that a work be purchased jointly with another. The Director indicates the amount of financial support he or she is requesting from the first committee, and then a vote is taken. If support is approved by one committee and not the other, the Director informs the first committee that support is not forthcoming from the other committee, so that the first committee's members have an opportunity to rescind their financial support. The Director has the option of trying to find funds from another source to complete the purchase.

A Board-appointed acquisition committee's role is to select, for purchase with committee funds, objects already determined worthy of acquisition by the curator. The credit line for those works purchased by a committee with its funds reads, "Purchase, with funds from the [Pertinent] Committee."

Should a non-curatorial committee decline to acquire a presented work, the Museum reserves the right to acquire the object by gift or purchase through other sources, and the acquisitions must be presented to the Curatorial Committee.

If a work is declined by a committee, and a committee member wishes to buy it, he or she shall inform the Director of his or her desire to do so. After a mutually agreed-upon time for the Museum to pursue the acquisition, if it wishes, and for the Director to discuss the matter with the committee chairman, the committee member may buy the work for his or her own collection, but is encouraged to make it a promised gift to the Museum.

Trustees and committee members have access to privileged information, that in all cases they must act in the best interests of the Museum and comply with the Museum's Code of Conduct.

### **Areas of Acquisition**

The focus of the Whitney's acquisition committees should be on the quality of a work of art and its significance to the Permanent Collection, and must never be restricted by traditional media definitions. The Whitney therefore strives to adapt its policies and committee structures so that, within certain practical and economic limitations, it can follow whatever directions contemporary art may take.

Works in all appropriate media may be acquired through purchase, donation, bequest, or exchange.

#### Painting and Sculpture

The Whitney collects traditional and current forms of American painting and sculpture. Understanding that the terms "painting" and "sculpture" in contemporary art are elastic and constantly in revision, the Museum should be flexible about such definitions. For example, appropriation, assemblage, and installation are but a few developments that challenge traditional definitions.

#### Prints

The Museum defines printmaking in the broadest terms. Because artists increasingly mix printmaking with other techniques and because new technologies will continue to revolutionize and expand our definition of what constitutes a print, restrictive definitions should be avoided.

The Whitney collects prints by twentieth-century and twenty-first century American artists.

Prints in the collection may be by artists who are known primarily for their work in other media or by artists specifically recognized for their contribution as printmakers. The Museum does not privilege one category over the other.

The Print collection should mirror the Permanent Collection as a whole, and it should develop concentrations of works by artists who are well represented in the Collection by other media. And, like the rest of the Permanent Collection, it should contain concentrations of both a particular artist's work and groups of works that follow a particular stylistic direction.

### Photography

The Museum collects photographs from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. However, so as not to duplicate the collections of other New York City art museums, most purchased acquisitions reflect developments in photography that have emerged since 1960.

Inasmuch as a skeletal collection of photographs by major early twentieth-century artists already exists at the Whitney, it occasionally acquires important historical photographs that complement this collection.

Within the Whitney Permanent Collection, photography exists both as an independent group of works and as an enrichment of works in other areas of the Collection.

### Drawings

The Whitney defines drawing in the broadest sense and the Collection encompasses both the hybridization of media and new technologies. The Museum also collects sketchbooks and preparatory studies when they are deemed to be of significant quality or historical importance. Nevertheless, the key criterion remains quality, since the drawings collection is an art collection, not an archival one.

The Museum has developed concentrations of drawings by key artists who are represented in the Collection by significant holdings in other media, such as drawings by sculptors. The Museum recognizes, however, the importance of collecting significant drawings by artists regardless of the media in which they work. Therefore, the collection also has concentrations of works by artists whose sole or primary form of expression is (or was) drawing.

### Film & Video/New Media

Film and video and New Media are increasingly used as an artist's primary media, but are often combined in installation formats. The changing technology for creating moving image-based works necessitates not having a restricted technical definition of film and video works.

Works collected may be by artists primarily known for their work in film or video or new media but may also be by artists who work across media.

### Library Special Collections

Works in the Library Special Collections are not part of the Whitney's Permanent Collection. These objects differ from works in the Permanent Collection in that their use is deemed to be primarily for research and reference and secondarily for exhibition. Should the museum receive a loan request for the exhibition of any library materials, the Registration Department will process the request in the same manner as loans of works of art.

## **Criteria**

Objects are added to the Permanent Collection by means of gifts, bequests, purchases, exchanges or any other transactions by which title to objects can legally pass to a museum. All works formally entering the Permanent Collection must pass under the review of the Curatorial Committee or one of the acquisition committees. Although the Director retains primary responsibility for the Museum's Permanent Collection, no work will enter the Permanent Collection unless it is voted on and approved by an acquisitions committee, or if a gift, by the Curatorial Committee.

It may be necessary to implement special temporary committee procedures for accepting gifts of work of art at "year-end," when tax laws make the timing of such contributions attractive to donors.

An object is eligible to be considered for accession into the collection provided it conforms to the following criteria:

In carrying out our responsibility to the past and our commitment to the present, the Whitney reaffirms the values and practices that have made it the preeminent museum of American art: (1) the practice of connoisseurship – the critical curatorial judgments of quality, including the application of aesthetic, artistic, and theoretical standards – in an intellectual tradition of open, skeptical analysis and scholarly detachment, (2) the ideal of America as an inclusive, pluralistic nation with the possibility of a common identity and culture, and (3) curatorial and museological innovation in programs and education.

### Artist Requirements

The Whitney adheres to its 1958 statement of "History, Purpose, and Activities," which says, "Foreign birth and citizenship are not considered: only whether an artist's career has been identified with this country."

The criteria for acquiring an artist's work are as follows:

An artist may be either an American citizen or may have produced a significant body of work while living in the United States. Eligibility determinations are made on a case-by-case basis by the Museum's Director in consultation with the Curatorial Committee.

The exhibition of an artist's work is an indication of the Museum's commitment to that artist. While artists who have previously exhibited works at the Whitney should be given priority in terms of acquisitions, this is no longer an acquisition requirement.<sup>1</sup>

### Object Requirements

Recognizing that the primary role and responsibility of the Whitney, as the custodian of an American cultural heritage, is to care for, preserve, and share the works of art it acquires, the Whitney must weigh the physical conditions and requirements of potential acquisitions against their potential artistic importance.

Works of art considered for acquisition must be in the best possible condition when compared to other available works of equal importance by the artist; the object must be in stable, presentable condition for exhibition or be able to be properly treated so that it can be exhibited. No work having major damage should be accepted unless the possibility for conservation has been assessed in advance of a committee vote. Donors should ideally be approached about contributing the required conservation and associative

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<sup>1</sup> Until 1991, it was a pre-requisite that an artist have been represented by a work in a Whitney exhibition, to be eligible for representation in the Permanent Collection. The restriction was eliminated to increase the Museum's freedom to build its Collection and to compete within the growing field of institutions collecting twentieth-century American art.

funds. A vendor should always be asked to reduce an object's selling price by the amount required for immediate conservation treatment.

In the event that a unique and important object becomes available which is in less than good condition, and it cannot be restored, the Whitney's Director, curators and Associate Director of Conservation and Research shall determine whether the work has sufficient art historic and aesthetic significance to outweigh the defects of its condition. If such a determination is affirmative, a work in less than good condition may be presented to an acquisition committee.

Some objects defy long-term preservation, such as those made of perishable materials. These acquisitions need to be considered by the Director, curators, Associate Director of Conservation and Research and Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection, on a case-by-case basis. The Whitney will also consider on the same basis works of art composed of potentially hazardous materials. Works that, in the discretion of the Director, jeopardize the safety of the rest of the Permanent Collection, the Museum building, the staff, or the public will not be accepted.

Other criteria for an object considered for acquisition are:

- Fit with Collection: The object must be consistent with and appropriate to the scope of the Collection goals and the Whitney's mission or be so unusual that it presents an exceptional opportunity for the Whitney and should therefore be given preferential consideration.
- Exhibition Potential. The object must have potential for exhibition and study.
- Conservation Concerns: The object can be properly cared for by the Whitney staff and the costs of conservation, preventive maintenance, storage, exhibition, documentation, or transportation will not override the intrinsic value of the object.
- Intellectual Property Rights: The object must be free of restraining intellectual property or title rights and it must be possible for a satisfactory resolution of any copyright or trademark issues or other restrictions or conditions to be effected.
- Provenance: The object must have an established provenance. It is the responsibility of the curator to ascertain the provenance of the work through contacts with artists themselves, donors, and dealers. The findings must be approved by the Director prior to presentation of the object to the appropriate acquisitions committee. Curators recommending an acquisition should be prepared to defend the legality and the morality of the transfer of ownership. An object will not be accessioned into the Permanent Collection without proof of a transfer of title, such as a signed Deed of Gift or original bill of sale, in hand.
- Price: If an object is acquired by purchase, the purchase price should be fair and in line with current market values for comparable works of art. Judgment should be made as to whether there is the possibility of obtaining a similar piece as a gift.
- Collection Management Costs: When a large collection of objects is being considered for acquisition, the indirect costs of that collection's management should be estimated prior to the time of acquisition. The impact upon the Museum's staff and resources should also be addressed, including: storage, conservation, cataloguing, computerization, research, photography, installation, and publicity. The sponsoring curator should discuss these concerns with the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection and Associate Director for Conservation and Research, prior to submitting the Proposal for Acquisition forms. A budget for processing a large collection should be established prior to its arrival on the premises.
- Proposal for Acquisition: All gifts, or bequests, under consideration for acquisition shall be approved at a curatorial meeting at which a quorum of curators (at least four) is present. A list will be prepared by the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection, of items for which a Proposal for Acquisition has been completed and where those objects are either on premises or in Whitney's control. That list will be

submitted for approval and upon approval will become part of the minutes of the curatorial meeting. The Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection, will annotate those works on the list with unusual storage, conservation or other considerations accordingly. The Documentation Manager, will provide a list of all purchases and gifts (with signed deeds) to the Board's secretary to be ratified at the next Board of Trustees meeting. Accession numbers will be assigned immediately following the Board's ratification. A list of works with new accession numbers will be supplied to the Board at the next meeting in order to form part of the minutes of the previous meeting. Acquisition Proposals for works that are declined are sent to the Documentation Manager to be kept in the artist's file.

Purchases are presented and approved by the appropriate collection committee.

Prior to the presentation of any work, the proposing curator must prepare and submit a Proposal for Acquisitions form to the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection two week prior to the next scheduled acquisitions committee meeting. This Proposal is required in order that the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection may bring the work to the Museum, for approval by the committee. The proposal is intended to establish the works historical importance in relation to the artist's body of work, its relationship to other works in the Whitney collection, and its appropriateness to the scope of the Whitney's mission and collecting goals. Once a work is approved, the Proposal for Acquisition form becomes the initial acquisition record.

An object should be acquired for the Permanent Collection only when there is a good faith intention to retain it permanently. When the intention is to sell or exchange an object it is accepted as property and is not accessioned.

## **Acquisition Transactions**

### Gift Categories

#### — Gift

Any donation of art by an individual or organization is categorized as a gift. To make a valid gift, there must be a clear intention on the part of the donor to transfer title and possession of the property. It is essential to the validity of such a gift that the transfer of both possession and title shall be absolute and shall go into immediate effect. The donor must intend not only to turn the work itself over to the Museum, but also to relinquish the right of dominion. The law will not recognize a gift where there is reserve to the donor any power of revocation or control. After a work is accepted by the Curatorial Committee, the donor is required to sign a standard Deed of Gift; this commits the donor to the above criteria. Upon receipt of the Deed of Gift, the work will be presented for ratification at the following Board meeting.

#### — Promised Gift

A donor may make a promised gift to the Whitney. A promised gift is a commitment by the donor to give a work to the Museum. All promised gifts must be presented to the Curatorial Committee for a vote. The Conservation Department will examine all proposed gifts prior to their presentation to the Curatorial Committee. Once the Committee accepts a work, the donor is required to sign a Deed of Promised Gift. The donor may either retain the work until the gift is completed or allow the Museum to retain the work in its custody from the time the Promised Gift form is signed. There may be concerns regarding the use, conservation, or security of the object that militate against a donor's maintaining custody of a promised gift. Owners of promised gifts who maintain custody must allow the Museum to borrow the works for exhibition, and to administer loans of the promised objects.

#### — Partial and Promised Gift

A donor may give part of a work and promise to give the remainder of the work at a later time. This arrangement is called a partial and promised gift. Acceptance of a partial and promised gift is

determined by a vote of the Curatorial Committee. Upon acceptance, it is required that a partial and promised gift agreement be signed binding the donor to complete the gift at or before his/her death. Donors should consult with their tax and legal advisors to ensure that the gifts are made in accordance with applicable law.

— **Property**

On rare occasions, a work that is not suitable for the Permanent Collection will be accepted as Property. In this instance, the work is catalogued and photographed but not given a Permanent Collection accession number. It is the Museum's policy to severely restrict the number of works accepted as Property. Furthermore, the museum should regularly review and reduce the number of property items.

- Objects accepted as Property are held for the period required by law for the donor to receive a maximum tax deduction, unless the donor agrees to allow disposal sooner. An object purchased for the Permanent Collection with funds received from the sale of Art Property is credited as a purchase with funds from the involved Property donor, unless the donor chooses not to be credited.

**Purchases**

Works of art categorized, as purchases are those works bought with endowed funds, acquisition-committee funds, and restricted funds given to the Museum by a private source, or any combination thereof.

- The identity of the seller in a sale must be clarified, especially in sales from an auction house or dealer when the actual owner may be a cosigner. This status must appear on the sales contract or other sales documentation. To protect against misrepresentation by a seller, it is critical that, prior to purchase, the object ownership be thoroughly studied. The curator must insist upon full documentation from the seller when provenance is an issue. Although warranty of title is implied in every sale of a work of art, the Museum's Standard Purchase Agreement must be used or the vendor's bill of sale must be evaluated for warranty of title to ascertain that vendor conveys good title, free from encumbrances.

The Whitney will pay for purchases only after the object is received in order to ensure that:

- The correct object has been received.
- The object is complete (i.e. any and all components have been received).
- The condition of the object is acceptable.

No object shall be purchased or accepted unless it meets the above criteria.

**Exchanges**

Works of art may be acquired via exchange of one work for another. This may take the form of trading with a living artist or with the estate of an artist gallery or other source. The Permanent Collection object being exchanged must first be deaccessioned. After an advanced discussion with the Curatorial Committee, the sponsoring curator must complete a Proposal for Acquisition form for formal presentation. All records should indicate the circumstances of the exchange, and all objects selected to replace deaccessioned objects must be approved by the Curatorial Committee and the Committee on Collections, and then ratified by the Board of Trustees.

**Bequests**

When the Museum is first notified that it is a beneficiary, the curators must determine the specific objects included or any terms of the bequest. A copy of the will, or pertinent portion thereof, should be obtained from the estate, by the Legal Officer, so that the nature of the gift can be verified. Photographs of the object(s) should be requested.

Bequests do not have to be accepted. The curators may recommend to the Director that all, some, or no objects are accepted for the Collection or that all, some, or none is accepted as property to be sold to benefit the Collection. If, after the curator decides to proceed with the acquisition, a Proposal for Acquisition form must be completed and the curator must present the works to the Curatorial Committee for approval. The appropriate curator notifies the executor of the estate of the Museum's intentions. The works are brought into the Museum and voted on by the Committee. The estate is then notified as to which works have been accepted. Refused bequests should be returned immediately to the estate and in no instance may they be held by the Museum for longer than two months. If the intended gift is not appropriate or is not accepted, suitable recipients should be suggested to the executor of the will.

For accepted bequests, a copy of the will, all codicils, and the letters of testamentary should be obtained and kept in the records of the Permanent Collection. All releases or receipts must be signed by the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection.

### **Acquisition Restrictions**

By resolution of the Board of Trustees (January 22, 1974), it is the policy of the Whitney that staff not be permitted to accession works that are restricted with respect to their exhibition, maintenance, or disposal. Once the Whitney takes possession of an object, it should have the sole right to determine how and when that work is shown, safeguarded, or deaccessioned, subject to standard museum practice.

Under rare circumstances, the Museum may agree to accept restrictions on a work of art, in which case a formal justification must be included in the Proposal for Acquisition. Any restrictions on a work or a collection of works (other than reproduction restrictions) must be presented to the Director and the Committee on Collections, which will make a recommendation to the Board of Trustees or Executive Committee for approval.

### Permanent Joint Ownership

Transactions involving binding terms for permanent joint ownership of an object must be reviewed and approved by the Director and will be reported to the Board of Trustees, Executive Committee, or Committee on Collections.

### Documentation of Approved Accessions

#### — Definition

Accessioning is the formal process used to accept and record objects in the Permanent Collection.

Basic to the Museum's responsible management of artworks is the proper documentation of accessioned objects. This documentation includes up-to-date written records of all activities affecting collection items (and items left in the Whitney's custody), such as original purchase documents, basic catalogue information, shipping documents, physical condition, and provenance.

— The Collections Department is responsible for supervising the creation and maintenance of a centralized body of manual and computerized accession records and other documentation related to acquired works. Acquisition documentation must be produced and updated in a consistent, accurate, complete, and timely way.

— Please page 27 for discussion of Documentation

### **Appraisals**

Under no circumstances will Museum staff give to donors, monetary value appraisals of objects for tax purposes. IRS regulations require written appraisals for gifts in excess of \$5000 (single objects or in aggregate within the period of a calendar year) and that the donors obtain a certificate of appraisal and an



acknowledgement from the Museum verifying receipt of gift (IRS form 8283). Upon the Museum's receipt of form 8283 for signature, a copy of the completed form, including certification of appraisal, will be retained as part of the object record. Appraisal costs should be borne by the donor.

#### Attribution Changes

A Reattribution Form must be prepared by the curator in charge whenever a documentation change is requested or warranted for a Permanent Collection object. Reattribution forms printed on acid-free paper are provided by the Registration Department. Changes must be justified and support documentation provided. Requests are processed by the Documentation Manager and reviewed by the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection and the Director.

#### Publication of Collection Information

Published data on the Collection must be the same as the information in the Collection records. Photographs of Collection objects for reproduction must be supplied or approved by the Manager of Rights and Reproductions.

#### Deaccessioning and Disposal of Works

The Museum may, from time to time, deem it necessary to deaccession objects from the Museum's collections. In considering Deaccessioning objects or groups of objects, the Museum must be ever aware of its role as trustee of the collections for the benefit of the public. Objects are acquired for permanent retention in the collections and not with the thought of disposal. When it is deemed prudent to do so, however, Deaccessioning may be considered. The act of Deaccessioning works of art from the Museum's collections requires exceptional care, reflects a museum policy, and should preserve the integrity of the collections. Deaccessioning should be carried out with at least the same degree of prudence as is exercised in acquisitions. The following Policy and Procedures apply to objects that have previously been accessioned into the Museum's collections.

- General Policy: Objects in the collections should be retained permanently if they continue to be useful to the purposes and activities of the Museum; if they continue to contribute to the integrity of the collections; and if they can be properly stored, preserved, and used. Objects may be deaccessioned when the above conditions no longer exist, or if it is determined that such action would ultimately improve or refine the collections, upon compliance with all legal requirements.
- Recommendation of Curator: Each object being considered for Deaccessioning must meet certain criteria, as evidenced by the written recommendation by the appropriate curator(s) to the Director and the Curatorial Committee, based upon one or more of the following:
  - The object is not relevant to or consistent with the Museum's purposes and activities.
  - The object no longer retains its physical integrity, its identity, or its authenticity as demonstrated by a conservator's report or curatorial research.
  - The object is an unnecessary duplicate of other objects in the collection, including objects which are repetitive of similar themes in a similar medium.
  - The object cannot be adequately cared for in a professionally acceptable manner.
  - Of the object, under specified circumstances, would ultimately improve or refine the collections.
- Compliance with Legal Requirements: Objects must be deaccessioned strictly in accordance with legal requirements. Legal compliance will be the responsibility of the Legal Officer.
- The Museum must determine that it holds clear legal title to any object which is considered for deaccession.
- Any mandatory restrictions on the disposition of objects (including those imposed by the donor or by law) will be determined and strictly observed. Similarly, if the objects were acquired by Museum funds that were restricted as to their use, such restrictions shall again apply to any proceeds received upon the sale of the objects. While precatory requests (i.e., non-binding preferences of donors) should be

taken into account where possible, such requests need not be followed if it is not in the best interests of the Museum to do so.

- A donor or living artist should be notified in writing by the Museum, whenever possible, if an object is to be deaccessioned.
- If the work was acquired within the past 25 years the curator shall use reasonable efforts (museum records, phone directory, and basic internet research, to identify any heirs of a donor. If the heirs can be located, the Museum should provide written notice to the heirs.
- Manner of Disposition: The manner of disposition should be determined by the Director in consultation with the curator taking into account the best interests of the Museum, the public it serves, the public trust it represents, and the scholarly and cultural communities it serves.
- Unless the Director and curator shall specifically determine that an alternative means of disposition is preferable, all dispositions shall be by sale, and the primary objective shall be to obtain the best possible price for the object being sold.
- Absent a specific determination to the contrary, all sales shall be at public auction.
- Consideration may be given to placing objects in another institution where they may serve a similar purpose to that for which they were originally acquired by the Museum.
- In the case of works by a living artist, the Museum will work in cooperation with the artist or his or her agent, by exchanging the work for a more desirable work, or by selling the work and applying the proceeds to the acquisition of a more desirable work.
- In the event that the Director and curator shall specifically determine that a disposition other than by sale is appropriate, the Director and curator shall specifically determine and implement the alternative means of disposition agreed upon. This may include witnessed destruction when a work is damaged beyond repair and is of no use for study or teaching purposes.
- Works determined by the curator and the conservator to be forgeries or copies will be retained as Property so as to avoid future public circulation, unless they can be donated to a recognized collection of forgeries. If purchased by the Museum, legal recourse may be taken against the seller.
- Absent mandatory donor restrictions or requirements, Museum employees, officers or trustees and their immediate family members (spouse and minor children and other family members who live at home) and other members of their immediate households and controlled entities may not be the purchasers or recipients of deaccessioned objects.
- For any object valued by the curator(s) or the Director at more than \$50,000, two disinterested outside written appraisals from qualified dealers or appraisers must be obtained prior to recommendation to the Committee on Collections.
- Use of Proceeds from Disposition: Proceeds derived from the sale of a deaccessioned object shall not be used as operating funds, but only for the replenishment of the art collection consistent with the acquisition procedures of the Museum. Any proceeds realized from the sale of work by a living artist shall be applied towards the purchase of work by that same artist. When acquired as a gift, proceeds shall be credited in the name of the original donor. When acquired as a purchase, the original source of funds will be credited per the Museum's guidelines for development of credit lines.
- Records: The conditions and circumstances of the deaccession will be entered and retained permanently as part of the Museum's collection records. In addition, where possible, a file on the object will be retained, consisting of photographs, laboratory reports, and other information useful in promoting the advancement of scholarly knowledge about the work. The Curator will inform living donor(s) of the new acquisition(s) bearing their name(s).
- Procedures: The following procedures for the deaccessioning of an object from the collections must be strictly adhered to:
  - The Committee on Collections will act on a proposal for Deaccessioning, subject to the following:
  - The curator shall have submitted the proposal in writing at a curatorial meeting, identifying the appropriate deaccession criteria (see form) for the object, as well as the nature and manner of the

proposed disposition. The proposal will include the written approval the Director. The vote of the Curatorial Committee shall be included in the minutes of the meeting.

- Each proposal shall be accompanied by a statement from the Documentation Manager describing any special restrictions on the disposition of the object and/or use of the proceeds to be received from the disposition of the object.
- Each proposal shall be accompanied by the printout from the permanent collection records and a photograph.
- Each proposal shall be accompanied by a current condition report.
- The work under consideration will be present at the meeting or available in storage, unless circumstances (i.e., long term loan, damage, or size) make this impossible.
- If the deaccession is approved by the Committee on Collections, the information will be included in the minutes and will be forwarded to the Board of Trustees or Executive Committee for approval and to the Museum's Collections Department for the permanent records of the collections.
- The Board of Trustees or Executive Committee will act on a recommendation to deaccession and approve disposal subject to the following:
  - The recommendation of the Committee on Collections will be submitted to the Board of Trustees or Executive Committee for its approval. Such approval shall include the nature and manner of the proposed disposition. The final authority to deaccession will rest with the Board of Trustees or Executive Committee.
  - After action by the Board of Trustees, and assuming the object is not to be given to another institution or exchanged, and further assuming that the object is to be disposed of at public auction (i.e., that the curator has not made a specific determination to sell other than at public auction), the Director, or at his request, the curator, will investigate the best public auction possibilities. The Director will set the auction reserve. After negotiation of the commission and other contractual terms of sale, the Legal Officer will deliver the contract documents to the authorized officer of the Museum for approval and execution. The Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection, in collaboration with the curator, will then oversee removal and sale. Transfers to another institution, exchanges, and dispositions other than by sale or public auction shall be accomplished in the manner approved by the Board of Trustees.
- Once a year, a report on deaccessioned works, the specific manner and venue of disposition, the proceeds realized, and expenses charged to the sale will be submitted to the Committee on Collections and the Board of Trustees. Any restrictions on the funds used to acquire the object will apply to the use of the proceeds received upon the disposition.
- Upon conclusion of the deaccession in process, the circumstances of the disposition and final results will be entered and retained as part of the Museum's permanent records of the collection.

Any level of authority, such as the Director, curator, Committee on Collections, or Board of Trustees participating in the approval process may refuse to deaccession a work, in which case the proposed deaccession will not be pursued further. However the work may be presented for deaccessioning later.

# Permanent Collection Loans

The tradition of lending objects from the Permanent Collection to other museums is in keeping with the professional practice of major art museums. Sharing the work of American artists with as broad an audience as possible is a continuation of the original mission of the museum. The Museum is itself an active borrower and therefore must have a Collection loan system in place.

## General Criteria for Loans

- For consideration by the Museum a formal written request must be received from an organizing/inquiring institution as follows:
- Loan requests must be received for domestic venues at least six months in advance of the exhibition opening date. All supplementary materials for any domestic request (slight changes in dates of exhibition, facility reports, hygrothermograph readings, etc.) must be received no later than four months in advance of the exhibition opening date in order for the request to be considered.
- Loan requests must be received for foreign venues at least nine months in advance of the exhibition opening date. All supplementary materials for any domestic request (dates of exhibition, facility reports, hygrothermograph readings, etc.) must be received no later than seven months in advance of the exhibition opening date in order for the request to be considered.
- After a loan has been approved, the Museum requires any additional works requested for loan and/or any additional venues requested for an exhibition tour be submitted for review at least three months in advance of the opening date of the exhibition.
- Each loan must be approved for a specific period and specific venue(s).
- The Museum may require inspection of the object(s) by a member of the Conservation or Registration Department during the period of the loan.
- An exhibition may not be composed entirely of Permanent Collection objects unless it is curated by a Whitney staff member and is treated as a permanent collection show.
- The number of objects approved for loan in a borrower's exhibition is limited to ten percent of the total number of objects in the exhibition. Any number beyond ten percent will only be made by special arrangement and may entail a special credit and/or fee to be negotiated at the discretion of the director in consultation with the Loan Committee.

## Evaluating Loan Requests from Museums

Loan requests are judged on the basis of: the availability of the object; ability of the object(s) to withstand the physical conditions presented by the loan (packing, transportation, handling, light, climatic conditions); adequacy of the proposed borrower's facility and ability to meet required security standards; amount of lead time given to properly prepare the loan; importance of the exhibition; whether or not a scholarly catalogue will be published in conjunction with the project; the importance of the solicited object(s) to the exhibition; the loan history of the work; the physical condition of the object; the time and costs of any required conservation of the work; the ability of the borrower's staff to handle and install the object(s); the availability of an appropriate Whitney staff member trained to accompany, unpack, install, dismantle, and repack the loan if necessary.

## Approval Authority

### — Loan Procedure

All loan requests are reviewed by the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection, the appropriate curator, and the Director in accordance with the Loan Procedure Policy. If loans are not initially refused they are also reviewed by a member of the conservation staff. If disagreements arise, a loan committee meeting is called and the loan is discussed. The committee is made up of the Director, Senior

Registrar, Permanent Collection, appropriate curators, Associate Director for Exhibitions and Collections, and Associate Director for Conservation and Research.

- Board Approval of Restricted Objects
- Objects valued at five million dollars or more are presented to the Board of Trustees or the Executive Committee of the Board (whichever group is scheduled to meet soonest) for final approval.
- Notification, Arrangements and Expenses
- It is the responsibility of the Registration Department to inform potential borrowers as to whether or not requested objects have been approved for loan, to outline and communicate loan stipulations, and to follow through on loan commitments.
- Non-Qualifying Requests for Loans
- A request for Loan will be refused if the object is to be exhibited in a non-public space to be used for promotional, propaganda, or non-aesthetic purposes of the borrower; to be used as part of an interactive “hands-on” display<sup>2</sup>.
- Loans to Non-Museum Borrowers
- Commercial Galleries
- The Whitney does not generally lend to commercial galleries. Exceptions may be made when requests demonstrate strong intellectual merit and unique educational benefits to the public and the work will be adequately protected and cared for. Where exceptions have been made, commercial galleries may not use reproductions of our loans in marketing materials. Reproductions may be used by commercial galleries for educational publications only.
- Government Loans
- Selected government agencies may borrow objects for educational purposes and must be capable of providing museum quality professional care for the objects.
- Exchange Loans
- Occasionally a request is presented for an “exchange” loan from the Permanent Collection, to fill a blank in a lender’s own gallery created by a loan coming to the Whitney. Such special requests are granted only rarely and shall be reviewed by the Loan Committee. It is preferred that the borrower absorb all related expenses.

#### Loan Fees

- Because operating a Permanent Collection loan program is expensive and labor-intensive; the Museum defrays the cost of administering the program by charging Loan Fees.
- The Loan Fee schedule is reviewed every five years or sooner if necessary, by the Loan Committee, and modifications are made as necessary.
- A higher fee schedule is applied if a loan request is received less than six months prior to the opening date of the involved exhibition, or if the borrower is a for-profit institution, or if the loan is international.
- The loan fee policy was instituted with two supporting principles: that all borrowers are obligated to help absorb loan administration costs and that the fairest way to enforce the policy is to make no exceptions. Responses to requests to waive Loan Fees are handled by the Loan Committee.
- Fees are non-refundable and must be paid before loan agreements the work is shipped to the Borrower.

#### Couriers

It is sometimes necessary for the safety of art objects to have them accompanied and/or installed by a qualified person. The designated Whitney courier must be a professional who is trained to evaluate the condition of the object and its special requirements; who is trained in art handling; and who is experienced with transport procedures. Courier assignments are the responsibility of Senior Registrar, Exhibitions to whom the assigned courier is responsible for the execution of all courier duties.

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<sup>2</sup> Unless the object is specifically designed for “hands-on” interaction.

Courier assignments are never used as staff “perks” or to defray the cost of travel or project budgets created for other purposes.

#### Insurance

As the Museum insures its collection under a blanket fine arts policy, it will, in order to manage its resources, charge borrowers a pro rata amount for insurance. Exceptions for special circumstances will be considered (loans to earthquake regions, reciprocal loans, loans to selected government agencies or offices, selected foreign indemnities).

# Objects In Temporary Custody Of The Museum

The Whitney is accountable for all objects solicited for acquisition or loan. It is imperative that all such works entrusted to the Museum be handled in a uniform manner.

## Procedure for Possible Acquisition

- Proposal for Acquisition: This form must be completed and given to the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection one month prior to the acquisition committee meeting at which an object is to be presented if the object is coming from out of town, if it must be prepared (i.e., framed) for presentation, or if it requires a conservator's evaluation of condition. The completed form must be given to the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection, two weeks in advance of an acquisition committee meeting if the object is available locally (within New York City) and requires no special preparation or inspection for presentation.
- Packing and Transportation Arrangements: Packing and shipping arrangements are usually made or approved by the Registration Department. In some cases the seller makes packing and shipping arrangements, and if so, appropriate waivers must be obtained. Any deviation from this policy risks unnecessary insurance claim complications and jeopardizes the reputation of the Museum.
- Registration and Storage: Each object considered for possible acquisition is registered "on exam" and must be stored in the Museum's sub-cellar (SC) art storeroom or in another location, arranged or approved by the Registration Department. A receipt will be issued to the appropriate party by the Registration Department upon arrival of the object and, if it is not acquired, upon the object's return.
- Acquisition Verdict: It is the responsibility of the sponsoring curator to notify the donor or the vendor immediately after a decision about an acquisition has been made so that either the object can be returned as quickly as possible or formal acquisition procedures can begin.

## Works Borrowed by Whitney for Exhibition

- Loan Agreements: Official loan requests must be submitted in writing. All original documents and a copy of the request are to be forwarded to the Registration Department. A Loan Agreement form, signed by the lender and counter signed by a representative of the registration department including all information essential to the museum, must be on file prior to the movement of a work of art to the Museum. Receipts are issued to the lender within three days of an object's arrival and within three days of its return. The Whitney must receive confirmation of an object's return and its condition upon return in the form of a signed receipt. Borrowed objects are registered, documented, and monitored by the Registration Department, which is also responsible for packing, transporting, receiving, unpacking, incoming and outgoing condition reports, receipts, and return of objects.
- Photography: The Rights and Reproductions Department arranges for installation photographs to be taken as soon as possible after an exhibition's opening for both security and archival purposes. Permission for all other installation photography must be screened and coordinated by the Registration Department.
- Extended/Long-Term/Indefinite Loans: The Whitney has a strict policy of not accepting responsibility for any object except when the object has been acquired, when it is being considered for acquisition, or when it has been borrowed for a specific exhibition or display period. Long-term deposit of objects with the Museum results in free storage and insurance for the owner at high cost to the Museum. Any deviation from this policy must be carefully reviewed by the curatorial and Registration staff with respect to cost and risk to the Museum as well as estimated frequency of the display of the object. Commitments to accept loans for an indefinite period must be approved by the Director.
- For Other Museums: Occasionally, property of other museums is received and held for a brief period, usually while objects are in transit. This is a rare occurrence but a reciprocated favor. The Whitney must obtain an insurance waiver of subrogation in these cases.

## **Personal Collections (Staff)**

### **Whitney Exhibitions**

- Objects belonging to staff members whose position in the Museum can affect exhibition programming and/or content may not be included in personally curated exhibitions. In case where objects belonging to staff members are included in exhibitions that are not personally curated, they shall be labeled as “Private Collection.”
- Objects created by artists on staff may be included in exhibitions provided the exhibited work is borrowed from a public collection or commercial gallery that represents them, or is part of a traveling exhibition organized by another museum.

### **Registration Procedure/Insurance**

Museum staff is discouraged from bringing personal art objects into the workplace for non-museum related purposes. Should such a circumstance be unavoidable, staff must notify the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection. Staff members' personal art property brought into the Breuer building must be registered with the Registration Department. A pass must be obtained from the Registration Department and surrendered to the security staff upon an object's removal from the building.

The Whitney's Fine Arts insurance policy is not applied to unsolicited artworks or artworks belonging to staff.

### **Display in Offices**

Museum staff is discouraged from displaying personally owned art objects in their offices with the exception of artworks by children.

### **Staff Art Exhibition**

Terms for works included in the annual staff art exhibition are outlined prior to each exhibition. Traditionally, staff members are responsible for filling out loan forms, packing, transporting, and insuring their loans and absorbing all related expenses.



# Care And Control Of Collections

## Preventive Maintenance

The Whitney recognizes the critical importance of preventive maintenance, which is the most economical and effective means of promoting the long-term preservation of art objects.

Preventive measures include:

- Temperature and Humidity Levels that are Appropriate and Consistent  
Galleries

Temperature: 68'-72' F.

Relative Humidity (RH) 48% -52%

- Storage

Temperature and RH must be the same as galleries with the exception of the storage environment required for the preservation of film, photographs, and videotapes. For them, the recommended levels are:

Color photographs, film, video: 40 F., 40%RH

Black-and-white photographs: 60 F., 40%RH

Color photographs, film, and video must acclimate gradually to the gallery environment. Before being removed from cold storage, they are held for a minimum of 24 hours at the temperature and humidity provided for storage of black-white photographs.

- Control of Light Level Standards in Foot-candles

Fugitive materials may not be exposed to unfiltered natural or fluorescent light. Most objects require protection from heat build-up produced by improper lighting.

## General Light Level Standards in Foot-candles

- Paintings (oil and acrylic): 25
- Tempera and gouache: 5-8
- Paper (stable prints and drawings): 8-12
- Paper (fragile media and supports): 5-8
- Paper (extremely fragile): 3-5
- Photographs
  - Polaroid: 5-8
  - Color: 5-8
  - Black-and-white: 8-10
- Sculpture
  - Some works are suitable for outdoor installation; light levels for others depend upon media vulnerabilities.
- Textiles
  - Depends upon fibers, age, condition, and dyes. Up to 15 Foot-candles recommended.

## Exhibition Terms

Guidelines for Maximum Annual Installation Time for Collection Loans.

— Paintings:	12 consecutive months
Tempera and Gouache:	3 months per year
Watercolors:	3 months per year
— Drawings:	3 months per year
— Prints:	3 months per year
— Photographs: <sup>21</sup>	
Polaroid	2 months per year
Color (other dm Polaroid)	3 months per year
Black-and-white	3 months per year
— Sculpture:	Depends upon medium or combination of materials
— Textiles:	Depends upon age, condition, kind of textile, and dyes

## Guidelines for Maximum Annual Installation Time for Whitney and Branch Installations

The guidelines for installation at the Whitney generally follow those for loans, with the exception of potential installation time for paintings and sculpture, which often can be safely installed for periods of more than 12 consecutive months.

### Air Quality

- Air Filtering: All air coming into contact with art objects must be adequately filtered. Removal of harmful particulates requires that all air in a room pass through an appropriate filtering process. Efforts must be made to successfully filter dirt and gaseous pollutants such as sulfur dioxide, nitrogen, and ozone. Ideally, all acidic gases should be eliminated. Air filters should be changed according to a set schedule at offsite storage locations, and in the main museum.
- Smoking: Smoking is prohibited everywhere in the Museum.

### Handling

Proper procedures for handling specific kinds of objects must be respected and enforced without exception. Adequate training and informed supervision by knowledgeable staff are imperative. Those authorized to handle art objects are conservators, the art handlers, storage manager(s), cataloguers, and, if necessary, others in the Collections, Exhibitions, and Curatorial departments. However, if trained art handlers are available, others should not handle art objects except in emergencies when objects are in danger of loss, damage, or destruction.

### Installation

Safe and proper installation and removal of art objects requires thorough planning and communication amongst the departments involved including registration, curatorial, art handling, conservation, exhibitions and facilities. The following are essential to object preservation: appropriate installation materials; all equipment required for safe moving and handling available and in good condition; adequate number of prepared, trained staff; qualified outside assistance if necessary; proper scheduling of the amount of installation and deinstallation time; adequate funding for safe handling and presentation of objects. Short-cuts jeopardize object safety, cause damage to the building, and can result in serious injuries to staff and others in the vicinity of an object during or after installation or removal. Installation design must integrate professional preventive conservation, as determined in discussions with the conservation department and

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<sup>1</sup> Recommendations of Nora Kennedy, Conservator of Photographs at the Metropolitan Museum of Art

security standards. The safety of art objects and human beings always takes priority over aesthetic considerations when compromises must be made. This policy applies to owned and borrowed works.

### **Object Condition Reports**

The Conservation Department is responsible for determining whether or not an object can be approved for installation or loan in its current condition. Thorough examinations are made by conservators prior to an object's being approved for loan, while condition reports, prepared by registrars, are written prior to an object's being packed, upon unpacking at each borrowing institution, upon packing at each borrowing institution and as soon as possible after its return--ideally, within 48 hours of delivery to its normal storage location and, in all cases, immediately upon being unpacked. An object's conservation history and vulnerabilities are taken into consideration when making loan, handling, packing, transportation, and installation decisions.

### **Exhibition Maintenance**

- Art Handlers: Art handlers are responsible for routine maintenance of frames glazing, pedestals, or cases. Routine maintenance includes tasks such as dusting or replacing components that are used up or that must be re-set during exhibition, with the exception of film and video works, which are attended by members of the Film and Video Department.
- When necessary, conservators are employed to dust or clean fragile objects (e.g., polish silver) or to advise on object maintenance procedures to be carried out by art handlers. Art Handler exhibition maintenance occurs a minimum of twice weekly. Some exhibitions demand more frequent maintenance scheduling.
- Security Staff: Security staff carries out routine exhibition checks and makes a verbal and written Incident Report if an object is missing, or seems to have changed in appearance. Written reports are distributed to Director, Associate Director for Exhibitions, and Collections Management Associate Director for Conservation and Research, Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection, appropriate curator(s), and the registrar in charge of an exhibition if an exhibition loan. The Senior Registrars, or, if not available, a representative of the responsible department, is called to the scene immediately should an object be reported missing or damaged and a conservator must be called to assess the nature and extent of a damage.
- Security staff must be made aware by the Senior Registrar or an assistant registrar of the vulnerability of works that could be mistaken for public seating, works over which the public might trip, works vulnerable to inadvertent kicking, and works visitors may be tempted to touch. Installation designs and security budgets must be planned in such a way that objects are appropriately protected.
- Exhibition Walk Through. Prior to the opening of an exhibition, the curator, registrar, head preparatory, Director of Facilities, Director of Security, and exhibition coordinator, if any, shall perform a walk through of the exhibition where any special security or safety issues will be identified.
- Floor Cleaning: The Director of Facilities is responsible for informing maintenance staff that cleaning equipment and appropriate solutions must not come within two feet of an object on the floor. This preventive conservation measure is of extreme importance when objects are placed directly on or near the floor.

### **Storage**

- Space/Maintenance: In addition to the environmental standards outlined previously, safe object storage requires adequate space for the orderly arrangement and safe movement of objects. Climate control equipment must be properly maintained, inspected regularly, serviced immediately if malfunctioning, and replaced when no longer able to maintain acceptable environmental standards by the storage

manager. Objects must not be allowed to become dusty and floors must be swept or cleaned weekly. Packing case exteriors must be vacuumed. Storage equipment (e.g., tops of sliding screens and storage cabinets) must be cleaned according to a regular schedule.

- Storage Furniture/Equipment: Certain materials and coatings can be destructive to particular kinds of objects. Careful research must be conducted by the conservation and registration departments to be certain storage equipment and materials are state of the art and not potentially harmful to objects. Because "state of the art" changes, staff must stay informed about improvements in storage products and materials, new warnings about solutions as well as current research on the aging of materials used in the housing of art work and whether they remain appropriate discovered by conservators and scientists to be detrimental to objects or less favorable for their long-term preservation.
- Pest Control: The museum must be vigilant about pest control and have routine programs in place for the main building, branches, and offsite storage. Incoming packing cases, packing materials, and objects must be carefully inspected for insects or signs of insects. Appropriate steps must be taken to isolate infested objects and materials while further action is planned. Food may not be consumed or kept in storage facilities.

### **Conservation Program**

The Associate Director for Conservation and Research and his/her staff are responsible for the Whitney's overall collection conservation program. They shall manage operating funds; approve, monitor, and complete conservation treatments; initiate and direct conservation research and projects; undertake technical studies of works in the collection; and remain informed of technical advances and changes in the conservation field.

Conservators will consult with artists and appropriate colleagues about conservation issues and will inform those involved of progress. Curators are routinely consulted about aesthetic decisions and other matters requiring their input. At the behest of the conservation department, a wide range of distinguished conservators with particular expertise will also be invited to participate in the program.

- Documentation: Conservation treatment records, condition histories, and information provided by artists on materials and techniques used to create Collection objects are maintained by the conservation department. These records are important resources for conservation project planning, for making informed loan decisions, and for conservators to study prior to making treatment recommendations.
- Inventory/Surveys: Notations on an object's condition are built into all Collection inventory procedures carried out by Registration Department staff.

### **Security**

#### Access to Galleries

- Contractors: Contractors are accompanied to and from work locations by appropriate Museum staff. Contractors are not to be left unattended in areas where art is installed, received, released, or stored, and must submit to an inspection of tool bags and other containers prior to leaving the Museum. They will be issued a list of rules and responsibilities by the Security Department.
- Art Truckers: Drivers and their assistants delivering or picking up art must be accompanied to and from the galleries and storage areas by appropriate members of the Registration Department.
- Staff: Staff and others not directly involved with the supervision or physical installation or dismantling of an exhibition are not permitted in galleries during such periods.
- Press Photographers: Press photographers must be accompanied to and from the galleries by a member of the department the visit. A member of the responsible department must be present for the

- entire photo session or take shifts with departmental colleagues. Those monitoring photographers must be familiar with the dangers of exposure of objects to the brightness and heat produced by lights.
- Photographers must be informed that they may not touch, alter or move art objects and that they must call for art handlers should any handling be necessary. When the Museum is open to the public, a Museum security guard must also be present to keep uninvolved people/staff from entering the area during shoots and breaks. The involvement of a security guard when the museum is closed to the public is left to the discretion of the department making arrangements. However, photography equipment should not be left unattended.
  - Visitors: Visitors permitted to view exhibitions on days or at times the Museum is closed must be accompanied by a Museum staff member. There can be no exceptions to this policy. The practice of allowing visits to exhibitions during non-public hours is discouraged, except in cases where a lender from out of town is unable to see an exhibition any other time. Staff accompanying visitors must notify the Facilities Department when a visit is over in order that lights are turned off if necessary.
  - Group Visits: The safety of art objects must be considered in approving the sizes of groups visiting galleries and determining the number of people required to monitor and control them (particularly children). Certain exhibitions demand that groups be smaller than usual. It is important that visitors not wear backpacks and that they be asked never to step backwards during tours, in order to prevent object damage.

#### Access to Works in Storage

- Staff: Staff members who wish to gain access to the storeroom on Sub Cellar are asked to make appointments with the Registration Department for access to the Permanent Collection or to works being considered for acquisition. Objects may be handled by trained staff but may not be moved within the storeroom or removed from the storeroom except in the presence of a member of the Registration department.
- Curators may work with their collections alone by providing in advance a list of art objects to be pulled. The Art Handlers will pull the art objects and make them available. If the works are oversized, an Art Handler will be present to assist. Gloves must be worn when handling art works. When the curator is finished the works will be returned to storage by the Art Handlers.
- Public Access: As a public institution, the Museum will strive to provide the public and the press full access to the collections consistent with reasonable request, staff availability, and the security, safety, and conservation of the objects. Requests for access to the collections not on public display will be honored where appropriate and coordinated through the Registration Department
- The Museum has always recognized the need for scholars and researchers to have access to original objects. Requests for public access to stored Permanent Collection objects are screened by the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection. Visits are generally limited to museum professionals, independent conservators, scholars and researchers, artists, and relatives of artists represented in the Collection.
- All requests must be made in writing, preferably on university, museum, or business letterhead, and the purpose or project must be described. Students must submit a letter from a professor or faculty adviser confirming their student status and project. Appointments are honored for the applicant only. No unexpected person is allowed to accompany the cleared visitor.
- Appointments to see Permanent Collection objects require a minimum of one month's notice and are scheduled for appropriate lengths of time. No photography is permitted. Visitors are informed that photographs of all Collection objects are available through the Rights and Reproductions Department. Visitors are asked to use only pencil when making notes.
- Appointments to see objects in the Special Collection of the Library are made by contacting the Library.

# Documentation And Inventories

## Documentation

A major responsibility of the Whitney is the creation and maintenance of up-to-date, accurate records on the history, identification, location, and condition of Permanent Collection objects. Collection documentation is a fundamental, ongoing, Museum responsibility, and it is essential that state-of-the-art electronic equipment and software and concomitant staff training be provided, for documentation maintenance, efficient retrieval, and keeping up with Collection growth.

Creation, maintenance, and preservation of Permanent Collection acquisition records, records for works accepted as property for future disposal, works being considered for acquisition, loan records, records of deaccessioned objects, records for objects borrowed for exhibition are the responsibility of the Registration Department. Each object receives a unique Museum number for easy retrieval of the object itself and of object information.

Any staff member in possession of such original documents establishing right and title to objects shall forward such documents to the Documentation Manager for filing. The Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection shall maintain and make available to curators and others qualified and approved as legitimate researchers all original records regarding accessioned or loaned objects in the custody of the Museum. The primary purpose of these records is the control and documentation of the collections. Therefore, these records should provide at least the following information, which will be recorded according to accepted standards.

- Identifying description of the object and the object number, e.g., artist, title date, medium, dimensions, accession, loan, non-accessioned, temporary custody, etc.
- Legal status of the object, e.g., whether the object is temporarily in the custody of the Museum, on loan, or owned by the Museum. If the object is owned, how its title was acquired, e.g., by gift, bequest, purchase, transfer, or exchange, and from whom.
- Credit line.
- Purchase price or accession value (in so far as is possible).
- Photograph(s) of object.
- Such provenance data as needed to contribute to the establishment of the legal status of the object.
- Activity of the object, e.g., loans, exhibits, conservation, movement inside or outside the Museum, transfer of responsibility between departments.

Curators will maintain contribute to the information on the objects within their custody, in particular, in so far as possible, they will establish each object's association, provenance, and use in sufficient depth to establish its proper place and importance within its field.

All primary records will be safeguarded from hazards such as fire, water, smoke damage, and loss. Where possible, duplicate records should be maintained. The following items of information are considered privileged items of information and will not be divulged to third parties unless the museum is legally obliged:

- Names of lenders, donors, and prior holders who have requested they remain anonymous.
- Mailing addresses of all donors, lenders, or prior holders.
- Location of objects.
- Valuation of objects.

Requests for information regarding the value of objects (purchase prices, appraisals, insurance values, etc.) will be referred through the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection to the Director for consideration. All guidelines outlined here apply equally to computer records.

A backup of the electronic catalog, which includes images of the works in the Permanent Collection, is stored off-site.

- Documentation Procedure: The specific procedures for recording and cataloguing objects accepted for the Permanent Collection are described in detail in a cataloguing manual maintained by the Documentation Manager under the supervision of the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection. The cataloguing manual establishes the guidelines for cataloguing new acquisitions and also provides a complete description of data entry standards.
- The procedure for initiating the accessioning and subsequent cataloguing of a work is as follows. The acquisition is verified by the Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection, who authorizes the assignment of an accession number and supplies pertinent documentation to the Documentation Manager.
- The Proposal for Acquisition form, prepared by the curator, is a vital reference for the Documentation Manager in preparing permanent accession records and tracking the final steps of the acquisition process. The Documentation Manager sends questionnaires to the donor or vendor and to the artist to gather specific information on the object. The Manager of Rights and Reproduction is responsible for securing reproduction rights.
- Inventories: The Museum undertakes periodic, comprehensive inventories of the Permanent Collection as well as spot-check inventories. It is desirable that the Museum accomplishes a complete inventory of the collection approximately every ten years. A varying number of objects -- but no fewer than ten per month -- are chosen at random for location confirmation. Each year a physical inventory will be conducted by the Registration Department from a list of all objects in the collection valued at \$2,500,000 and above.

# Insurance And Risk Management

## Determination of Adequate Fine Arts Coverage

- Regular Review: At least once every three years a review will be done to determine how to best insure, under one blanket fine arts policy, both the Museum's collections and property borrowed from others.
- Approval of Policy Limits: Coverage limits for the blanket fine arts policy are reviewed at least once every three years by the Director with the Board of Trustees.
- The Trustees assume responsibility for the fact that the Collection is not covered for full value per standard museum practice and the Board must therefore approve coverage limits.
- Negotiations and implementation: The Associate Director for Exhibitions and Collections Management, and the Senior Registrars negotiate and administer the blanket fine arts policy and arranges for modifications, such as temporary excess coverage, as required during the life of the policy.

## Object Insurance Values

- Collection Objects: Collection objects covered by the blanket fine arts insurance policy are insured for market value at time of loss. Therefore, it is not necessary to attempt to maintain records of current object values. However, it is important that periodic collection value updates occur. Curators will update the values of works that have not had their values updated within the previous five years, prior to release to borrowers. Regardless of the policy above, the curators will review the values of requested works if the artist has had a major exhibition during the five years preceding the loan request.
- Promised Gifts: Promised gifts in the custody and control of the Museum are insured by the Museum with the owner's permission and for a value requested by the owner and agreed upon by the Museum. Those objects in the custody and control of the owner are not insured by the Museum.
- Partial and Promised Gifts: In the case of Partial and Promised Gifts, the Museum insures the object when on its premises. Conversely, when on the partial owner's premises the Museum will continue to insure its share and the partial owner will insure the object according to his or her percentage interest and will issue a Certificate of Insurance to the Museum naming the Museum as additional insured.
- Borrowed Objects: Insurance values must be provided by the lender and agreed upon by the organizing curator prior to the Museum's accepting responsibility for borrowed art objects. Borrowed objects solicited by the Museum for exhibition loan, long-term loan, or possible acquisition will be insured for full value if the Museum insures.
- Undervalued and Overvalued Borrowed Objects: Curators should be aware of the market value of objects selected for exhibitions they are organizing, and should sign off on values. Consequently, it is an exhibition curator's responsibility to offer at least two appraisal sources to lenders whom, in the curator's professional judgment, have over valued or undervalued works by significant amounts.

## Reciprocal Agreements

- The Senior Registrar, Permanent Collection, will negotiate reciprocal agreements with sister institutions where there is mutual and substantial frequency of requests for objects. In such cases both institutions as lenders will accept the others insurance coverage or will insure its own property while on loan at no cost to the borrower, however a certificate of Insurance will be issued to the lender prior to the release of the object, naming the lender as additional insured and loss payee.
- Government Indemnities: The terms of various governments' indemnification policies for art objects and exhibitions change frequently and differ from country to country. A borrower requesting that the Museum's objects be covered by a foreign indemnity must supply an English language copy of the indemnity offered. Prior to the Museum agreeing to acceptance of a foreign indemnity, the Senior



Registrar, Exhibitions will review the indemnity offered and assure that its coverage matches or exceeds that of the Museum's own policy. If it is accepted, the borrower's indemnifying body must provide the Museum with a Certificate of Insurance for the amount covered by the indemnity. If the indemnity has a deductible the Museum will continue its own coverage for the deductible and bill the borrower.

- Exhibition Security Inventories/Removal of Works from Exhibition
- During an exhibition, checks are made on a daily basis by staff from several departments. Once an object has been removed from an installation the registration department immediately replaces the object with a removal label stating the name of the object, the title and the date and time the object was removed and under whose authorization. Except in emergencies, a member of the Registration Department must give authorization for object removal and will supply the necessary explanatory label, and notify the appropriate curator.
- Reporting Loss or Damage: Loss or damage of any object insured by the Museum, or on loan to the Museum, must be reported to the Senior Registrars and conservator with a copy of the report to the Director, Associate Director for Exhibitions and Collections Management, Associate Director for Conservation and Research, the appropriate curator, and the Director of Security. Loss or damage must be reported to the involved lender and the insurer as quickly as possible after the occurrence.
- Disaster Preparedness: The Museum will have in place a disaster preparedness plan that will anticipate needs that may arise from damage to collection that might be caused by a range of emergencies. The emergencies that will be addressed in the plan are floods and leaks, fire, electrical power interruptions, biological infestations, structural or mechanical failures or vandalism. Thus the plan will anticipate necessary responses to any of these conditions in the main building, at the offsite storage location and at any associated site in order to reduce or eliminate potential damage.

### **Special Events**

- Notification, Event Description: The Associate Director for Exhibitions and Collections Management and the appropriate Senior Registrar must be notified about all special events taking place in areas where art is exhibited, in order to make decisions about the protection or removal of art objects. It is imperative that notifications include location of the event, nature of the activity, date, time and number of people expected, and the name, department and telephone number of the person coordinating the activity.
- Special Protection or Removal of Art Objects and Costs: The location and nature of the event and number of people attending may mandate that works be specially protected by the addition of extra security guards, or by protective measures such as installing pedestals or barriers. It may be determined by the Registrars that objects must be removed prior to the event and replaced afterwards.
- Vulnerable objects and objects that might pose a danger in the discretion of the Registrar to visitors must always be removed to accommodate events.
- All artworks must be removed in advance from areas where equipment such as scaffolding will be installed or machines such as scissors-lifts will be required for the installation of special lighting, signs or decorations.
- Any expense incurred on behalf of an event (materials, staff overtime, etc.) must be charged to the event.
- Food and Beverages  
Borrowed Works: No eating or drinking is allowed in areas where borrowed art is present, unless owners or their agents provide written permission.  
Collection Works: No eating or drinking is allowed in areas where collection works are present, except in galleries where works are covered with or enclosed in glass or Plexiglas, or hung high enough that the works are out of reach.

- Supervision of Caterers and Florists: Caterers and florists must be closely supervised by Museum Staff and restricted areas of the Museum in which their work must be done. Bars may not be installed anywhere near artwork.
- Use of Loading Dock: The arrival and release of catering equipment must be coordinated so as not to interfere with the arrival and release of art objects. The loading dock cannot be opened for receiving and releasing supplies for an event unless the Loading Dock attendant or an Art Handler is present.
- Photography: Artworks must not be used as backdrops for posed photographs (e.g., models) without permission of the Museum and the artist. If permission has been granted, all set up and preparation of models is to be done in a room separate from the artwork. Photographers hired to cover events must be given a set of guidelines, including the fact that no one being photographed is to be encouraged to touch art or appear to be touching art, or to jeopardize or appear to be jeopardizing the welfare of an object.

# **Revisions And Amendments To The Collections Management Policy**

The importance and complexity of managing the Collections and works on deposit make it imperative that this policy be reviewed periodically, updated when necessary, and improved whenever possible. The Associate Director for Exhibitions and Collections Management is responsible for recommending changes to the Committee on Collections in order to keep the document current. Staff recommendations for changes should be made to the Associate Director for Exhibitions and Collections Management who will consult with appropriate administrative and curatorial staff. Board recommendations for changes must be made to a member of the Committee on Collections for consideration at its next meeting. The Director, the Senior Registrars and the Associate Director for Exhibitions and Collections Management are responsible for monitoring the Museum's compliance with this policy.

Major collection policy decisions, such as those affecting the Museum's mission statement, Deaccessioning practice and fine arts coverage limits, for example, must be approved by the Board of Trustees.