

Collection Management Policy

I. MUSEUM STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Mission: Connecting People through Art. Tacoma Art Museum serves the diverse communities of the Northwest through its collection, exhibitions, and learning programs, emphasizing art and artists from the Northwest and the broader western region.

Vision: To be the national model for regional museums by creating a dynamic museum that engages, inspires, and builds community through art.

Key Strategies (approved by the Board of Trustees December 2008):

1. Changing lives through seeing, creating and exploring art together.
 - 1.a. Engage visitors and artists in creating the stories of Northwest art in a national and international context.
 - 1.b. Bring meaningful art experiences to a diverse audience in partnership with key civic organizations.
 - 1.c. Increase length and frequency of visits and broaden participation.
2. Building the premier collection of Northwest art.
 - 2.a. Develop a ten-year collection plan by June 2009.
 - 2.b. Develop a plan to attract and involve more leaders in Northwest art by December 2009
 - 2.c. Expand the definition of Northwest art to include British Columbia and Alaska in the collection and exhibition program over the next five years.
3. Creating a gathering space for people, performances and art.
 - 3.a. Develop a plan to address landscaping, art, and signage elements to increase visibility and to support the museum's values of civic-mindedness and approachability by spring 2009.
 - 3.b. Launch a capital campaign for the redesign project and complete it by 2011.

II. COLLECTION STATEMENT OF AUTHORITY

Board of Trustees:

The business and affairs of Tacoma Art Museum are managed by a Board of Trustees. The Board makes all decisions involving matters of Museum policy and the disposition of Museum funds or property, assigns duties and responsibilities of the officers of the Museum when necessary to supplement the delegations set forth in the organizational Bylaws, supervises the officers in the appropriate performance of their duties and responsibilities, and is responsible for the overall management and direction of the Museum's activities and operations as outlined in the Museum's By-Laws.

Collection Committee:

The Collection Committee, a Standing Committee of Tacoma Art Museum's Board of Trustees, is charged with reviewing and recommending a Collection Management Policy to the Board of Trustees. It also advises the Board of Trustees on acquisitions and deaccessions. As governed by the Museum's By-Laws, Chairs and members of the Collection Committee are appointed by the President of the Board of Trustees. The Collection Committee Chairs must be members of the Board of Trustees. The Chairs may invite community members to serve on the Collection Committee. Tacoma Art Museum's Executive Director will annually extend an invitation to Bellevue Art Museum to appoint a staff member or other representative to the Collection Committee as per the 1998 collection transfer agreement.

Staff:

The Executive Director is responsible for the day-to-day operations of the Museum including the exhibition, loan and preservation of works of art belonging to the Museum, and recommending accessions or deaccessions. The Executive Director is an ex officio, non-voting member of the Collection Committee. The Executive Director delegates responsibility for the development and management of the collection to the Curatorial and Registration staff. In keeping with their job functions, the Curatorial and Registration staff also attend Collection Committee meetings.

Quorum: A majority of the voting members of the Board of Trustees present either in person or by proxy, shall be necessary and sufficient for all meetings to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Voting: A committee member may vote in person or by proxy executed in writing by such committee member or such member's duly authorized attorney-in-fact. A proxy shall be valid only for the purpose of voting on the specific matters described therein and only at the meeting designated in the proxy.

(The Board of Trustees of Tacoma Art Museum adopted the Bylaws that support the policies reflected here in April 2006.)

III. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Collection Committee oversees the acquisition and deaccessioning of the Museum's collections; develops policy in these areas and assures that the quality and focus of the collections meet the museum's mission; assists in the cultivation of potential donors of art to the Museum; oversees registration and conservation activities of the Museum, including developing awareness in the Board of Trustees concerning these issues.

- Attend Collection Committee meetings or provide proxy vote
- Have knowledge of Tacoma Art Museum's Collection Management Policy
 - Oversight/recommendations to Board of Trustees
 - Approve minutes of Collection Committee meetings
 - Approve accessions and deaccessions based on the following criteria:
 - Appropriateness
 - Fit with Ten-Year Collection Plan
 - Condition
 - Maintenance and storage costs

- Monitor ethics, conflict of interest, and collecting by museum staff
- Review
 - Declined gifts and purchases
 - Outgoing loans
 - Conservation of works in the collection
- Prepare for Collection Committee meetings
 - Express opinions about the quality of work being offered for consideration and the role of the artist in the Northwest and the broader Western region
 - Ask questions about how offered works fit into the Ten-Year Collection Plan and curatorial vision
- Have knowledge of Ten-Year Collection Plan
- Have knowledge of five-year review cycle of Collection Management Policy and bring to discussion those policy issues as needed
- Develop policy recommendations to Board of Trustees
- Champion major art purchases
 - Help identify potential donors and advocate for purchases
 - Support purchases with funds when possible
- Assist in building relationships with Northwest art leaders per Strategic Plan goals
 - Identify works and donors
 - Steward relationships
- Develop art knowledge of Northwest art, western American art, and legacy collections at Tacoma Art Museum
- Participate in optional tours, travel, and events

IV. ACCESSIONS

Tacoma Art Museum accessioning objects within the scope of the collecting plan. Accessioning is the formal process by which objects are accepted and recorded as property of Tacoma Art Museum's permanent collection. Recommendations for accessions are made by the Curatorial Staff and Executive Director to the Collection Committee and then, through the Collection Committee, to the Board of Trustees. The Museum does not accept non-accessioned items into the permanent collection. The Museum, on occasion, accepts non-accessioned acquisitions: these are works of art that have been acquired by the museum but that are not accessioned. They may later be accessioned into the collection, sold, exchanged, or retained for study purposes. The Museum may acquire works of art by gift, bequest, promised gift, purchase, or other appropriate means. The Museum only accepts donations of art without restrictions to its authority to retain, sell, or otherwise utilize materials in the best interest of the Museum.

The Museum uses the following criteria in evaluating its recommendations for accessioning works into the Collection:

MUSEUM QUALITY: The Museum collects objects of recognized and/or discernable superior quality. Museum quality implies an artwork clearly exhibits a level of excellence in technique, skill of execution, creativity, innovation, and/or intellectual rigor.

RELATEDNESS TO THE COLLECTIONS: The work of art being considered for acquisition should relate to a collection which the Museum currently owns.

PROVENANCE: The provenance of a work of art refers to the history of previous ownership. The significance of a work of art is enhanced when provenance records indicate that a work has been owned by respected dealers, collectors, or businesses. A lack of provenance for a historical work can indicate problems with authenticity or legal title. Preference is given to accessioning objects which have complete provenance history.

No object is accessioned without satisfactory assurance that the donor or seller can transfer free, clear, and unencumbered title. Diligence should be used to ensure that the work of art has not been illegally imported into the United States and that there are no legal, ethical, or environmental considerations which would make its accession undesirable. The provenance of any work of art to be gifted or purchased should be up to date and indicate clear legal transfer of ownership. If the provenance is not complete, it must be noted at time of acquisition and provision for completion included in the acquisition proposed.

Documentation of provenance may consist of: deed of gift, publisher's printed statement of edition, letters of transmittal, dealers labels, printer or collector's "chops," estate stamps, invoices, statements, receipts, exhibition/auction catalogues, inventory lists, duty or tax receipts, etc. Provenance documentation is included in the object's file.

Tacoma Art Museum will not acquire artwork that incorporates any specimens or material that has not been obtained under valid federal or state permits. The museum will not accession any artwork that incorporates any specimen or component thereof in violation of the Endangered Species Act, the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the Marine Mammal Protection Act, the Migratory Bird Treaty Act, the Bald Eagle Protection Act, or other local, state, federal, or international regulations governing the collection and possession of flora and fauna.

Tacoma Art Museum will not acquire any archaeological, cultural, or ethnographic object that cannot be shown to have been exported legally from its country of origin. The Museum will not acquire any object if there is reasonable cause to believe that the circumstances of its recovery involved the unscientific or intentional destruction of site or monuments. This prohibition shall also apply to objects reasonably believed to have been illegally excavated in the United States. The Museum will adhere to the standards set by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act. The Museum will also adhere to the standards set by the American Alliance of Museums in concerning the unlawful appropriation of objects during the Nazi Era. The Museum is committed to researching and documenting its collection of works that were (1) created before 1946 and acquired by the Museum, (2) potentially underwent a change of ownership between 1932 and 1946, and (3) were or might reasonably thought to have been in continental Europe between 1932 and 1946.

VALUE: The value of art objects can be expressed in monetary terms for insurance and accounting purposes. Monetary value may be determined by a professional appraisal, by curatorial estimate, or by sale/auction records (including recent sale of a comparable example). By itself, value is not sufficient criteria to justify acceptance of a work into the collection. Value is not a constant, and changes in value may include increases as well as decreases. This is affected by fads, trends, scholarship, and availability.

CRITICAL ACCLAIM: The considered opinion of a work of art should be based on prominent and eminent sources and not subject to fashion or trends of thought. There are many possible indications of critical acclaim including:

- The publication and/or exhibition history of a single work or of a body of works by an artist
- By analysis and/or description by a recognized scholar/critic published in professional journals, art periodicals, or books.
- Awards, grants, fellowships, or other honors conferred to the artist or the artist's work.
- The esteem by which other artists refer to this work or the influence this work has had on other artists.
- The number of important collections (museums, corporations, and private individuals) which contain work by the artist.

QUANTITY: Quantity relates to the purposes and functions of the collection. Determining the number of works to be accessioned by a single artist or group include such criteria as the stature of the artist, the accessibility of material at other institutions, geographical proximity of other collections, and the importance of the material to membership/community. The purposes of research and study may be significantly enhanced by collecting works in quantity. Collections of some quantity offer the opportunity to compare and contrast, study variation, and determine scope of expression.

CONDITION: The condition of a work is determined by an analysis of a variety of elements. The decision for acquisition should be based on positive evidence in the following categories:

- **Authorship:** There should be clear indication of authenticity of authorship. This may be determined by signature, the legal papers of provenance, documentation of licensed appraiser, or written statement of a qualified scholar. Where relevant, the Museum will acquire signed works.
- **Conservation history:** If the work is not in its original condition, the information should be obtained at the time of acquisition regarding any conservation history, including not only direct treatments of surface, but also restretching, reframing, rematting, and storage conditions. Evidence of restoration should be carefully considered in terms of the extent of restoration, the materials used in restoration, and the overall effect of restoration efforts. Conservation information will help in assessing any additional costs and responsibilities the Museum may be assuming in accepting this work for the collection.
- **Inherent vice:** Of particular concern is the impermanent nature of materials used by the artist and/or production methods which prohibit long-term survival of the work. Although principally of concern with works from the twentieth century, problems occur with earlier examples (and non-Western examples) as well.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE: Works of art can have historical significance apart from being exemplary aesthetic works or representative examples of a specific artist's body of work. There may be instances where the historical significance of the work far exceeds its aesthetic value. A work may have been associated with an important exhibition, may be identified for its relationship to other, non-visual art expressions. It may be the sole surviving example of a style or period.

V. DEACCESSIONS

Artworks and artifacts remain in the permanent collection so long as they continue to serve and interpret the purposes of the Museum and as long as they can be adequately stored, preserved, used, and maintained according to professional museum standards of care.

Deaccessioning is considered when such conditions no longer prevail or when removal of the object is in the best interest of the Museum and the public it serves.

Deaccessioning is undertaken with exceptional caution and care and reflects Museum policy rather than current crisis or changing preferences.

PRIORITIES FOR DEACCESSIONING: Priorities for deaccessioning include questions of authenticity, exhibition and/or educational values, duplication of items, physical condition, and aesthetic quality. In general, the object or objects in question will:

- be outside the scope of the charter purpose of the Museum and its acquisition policies;
- no longer be relevant or useful and/or incompatible with the purpose of the Museum or conceivable future purposes of the Museum;
- have evidence of deterioration beyond repair or usefulness;
- be an inferior work;
- duplicate other similar examples in the collection;
- be confirmed through research that the artwork's authenticity is no longer valid.

METHODS OF DISPOSAL: The disposal method of an object is assessed on an individual basis, considering the nature of the original acquisition, the type of object, the value of the object, and the interests of the public trust in matters of public accountability and management of the Museum. Methods of disposal may include:

- Transfer or donation to another non-profit, public institution, museum, or agency;
- Sale to a non-profit public institution, museum, or agency;
- Consignment to an auction house or dealer;
- Sale or trade to a dealer or individual for an object of equal or greater value and which will be accessioned into the collection of the Museum and improve the collection of the Museum;
- Destruction of an object due to deterioration or danger to Museum and/or its staff and the public.

RESTRICTIONS: No object will be deaccessioned if the Museum cannot prove beyond reasonable doubt its clear and unrestricted title of ownership to the object. The Museum will not remove an object of great historical or cultural value in relation to the Museum's collection interests. The funds received from the disposal of a deaccessioned work from the Museum's collection shall not be used for operations or capital expenses. Such funds, including any earnings and appreciation thereon, may be used only for the acquisition of works or to cover expenses incurred and directly related to the deaccession process in a manner consistent with the museum's policy on the use of restricted acquisition funds. No employee, volunteer, or other person formally associated with the Museum may acquire through gift, sale, or auction objects deaccessioned from the collection of the Museum. Nor may any employee, volunteer, or other person

formally associated with the Museum personally benefit from the disposal of art from the Museum's collection or property.

PROCESS: The authority that governs acquisitions also governs deaccessions. Recommendations for deaccessioning will be made by the Curatorial staff and Executive Director to the Collection Committee, and, through the Committee, to the Board of Trustees. Each potential deaccession will be thoroughly researched to certify there are no legal restrictions that preclude deaccessioning, including reviewing application of all international, federal, and state laws governing collections such as UNESCO Convention, NAGPRA, ARPA, and Visual Artists Rights Act. All paperwork concerning the proposal for deaccession, method of disposal, catalogues, receipts, and correspondence, including actions and recommendations noted by the Collection Committee and the Board of Trustees, will be retained by the Registrar.

XI. CODE OF ETHICS

Tacoma Art Museum is guided by its own Code of Ethics as stated in the Museum's By-Laws and the Code of Ethics adopted by the American Alliance of Museums. Tacoma Art Museum also complies with all applicable local, state, and federal laws, international conventions, and legal standards governing museum collections.

The Board of Trustees, employees and volunteers of Tacoma Art Museum are expected to uphold professional standards in relation to the collection. Specifically, no individual may use his or her position for personal gain or to benefit another, in contravention to the institutional Code of Ethics for Tacoma Art Museum.

PERSONAL COLLECTIONS: In regards to personal collecting, the museum trustees and staff conform to the institutional Code of Ethics for Tacoma Art Museum which cites that the interests of the museum and its collecting priorities shall prevail when a conflict arises. It is of the utmost importance that the acquisition of works of art by museum staff members in no way competes with or jeopardizes the collecting interests of the museum. To avoid a conflict of interest, staff members should conform to the following practices. In principle, these practices are established to eliminate competition, conflict of interest, and perceived conflict of interest. They are not established to entirely deny museum staff the freedom to acquire works of art for personal collections.

- Museum staff should not amass a collection in direct conflict and competition with the museum's stated collection goals.
- Museum staff will notify the Collection Committee of all art purchases with a value of \$5,000 or more. The Museum, through consideration by its Collection Committee, will retain the right of first refusal to purchase the work(s) of art under review.
- Museum staff will notify the Collection Committee of all gifts of art from living artists with a value of \$5,000 or more.
- All Museum staff and the Board of Trustees members are encouraged to consider offering their art purchases as promised gifts to the Museum.

APPRAISALS: Tacoma Art Museum staff or Board of Trustee members may not give appraisals for any reason. Appraisals for gifts or bequests must be made by an

independent person or agency, as required by regulations of the Internal Revenue Service. Nor will any of the staff give tax advice.