

# **The Glasgow School of Art: Museum and Archive Collections**

## **Acquisition and Disposal Policy**

### **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This Policy Statement regulates the acquisition and disposal of items for the Museum and Archive Collections of The Glasgow School of Art.
- 1.2 It has been approved by the Board of Governors at their meeting on 8 October 2007.
- 1.3 It is intended that this policy should be reconsidered at least once every five years and no later than September 2012 and a revised document brought before the Board of Governors for its agreement. The Scottish Museums Council will be notified of any changes to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy and the implications of such changes for the future of existing collections.
- 1.4 This Policy Statement supersedes all previous and existing practices and policies, formal or informal, relating to the acquisition of items for the Museum and Archive Collections.
- 1.5 This policy will be made publicly available in the Museum and Archive's reading room and on the School's website ([www.gsa.ac.uk](http://www.gsa.ac.uk)). A copy will also be sent to The National Archives (National Advisory Services).

### **2.0 Existing Collections**

- 2.1 The Glasgow School of Art Museum Collections are in three distinct categories; Mackintosh, 'non-Mackintosh' and Plaster Casts. The Mackintosh Collection consists of some 300 objects, chiefly furniture and works on paper, by Charles Rennie Mackintosh. The School's non-Mackintosh Collection consists of some 2500+ items, almost all by former staff and students of the School, and includes drawings, paintings, prints, architectural studies, ceramics, sculpture, furniture, stained glass, textiles and metalwork. In addition, some 200 items form the Plaster Cast Collection, an archive of full-size classical statuary and architectural fragments dating from the mid-to-late 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- 2.2 The Glasgow School of Art Archives comprise the School's institutional records (dating from the School's foundation in 1845 to the present day), together with collections deposited by individuals and associations connected to the School. Material housed in the archives includes paper-based records, audio-visual material, photographs, glass plate negatives and textiles and totals some 25,000 items.

### **3.0 Future Collecting**

- 3.1 The extent of future acquisitions for The Glasgow School of Art Museum and Archive Collections (as a result of gift, loan, bequest, purchase or exchange) will be restricted to items of a fine art, design or architectural nature. All future acquisitions will relate to either the history or development of teaching at the School, or will consist of work and/or records either produced by, or in the collection of, former staff and students of the School, current staff and students of the School or by individuals or groups directly associated with the School.

## **ACQUISITIONS**

### **4.0 General Rules for Acquisition**

- 4.1 The Museum and Archive recognises its responsibility, in making new acquisitions, to ensure that care, documentation and use of the collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation standard and the National Archives Standard for Record Repositories. Accordingly, it will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by factors such as inadequate staffing, storage and care of collections arrangements. Where the acquisition of any item would result in significant resource implications, the matter will be referred to the Board of Governors for decision.
- 4.2 The Museum and Archive will exercise due diligence and will make every effort not to acquire any item, object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the Museum and Archive can acquire valid title to the item in question.
- 4.3 In particular, the Museum and Archive will not acquire any item, object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the item, object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom.
- 4.4 In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the Museum and Archive will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The Governing body will be guided by the UK national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by DCMS in 2005.
- 4.5 The Museum and Archive will not acquire any biological or geological material.
- 4.6 The Museum and Archive will not acquire any archaeological material.
- 4.7 The only exceptions to the above General Rules – 4.2, 4.3, 4.4, 4.6 - will be in specific circumstances where the Museum or Archive is either:
- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material from the UK;
  - or acquiring an item of minor importance that lacks secure ownership history but in the best judgment of experts in the field concerned has not been illicitly traded;

- or acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin;
- or in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970.

In these cases the Museum and Archive will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the permission of an appropriate outside authority.

- 4.8 The Museum will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period' issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission.

## **5.0 Collecting Procedures**

- 5.1 The Mackintosh Curator and The Glasgow School of Art's Archivist, as the Museum and Archive Committee's senior museum and archive professionals respectively, will normally have delegated authority and responsibility for
- a) the acceptance or rejection of potential gifts or bequests to the Museum and Archive respectively
  - b) soliciting gifts of material for the collections within the terms of this policy
  - c) for making recommendations and taking action on the purchase of material

These actions will be carried out in accordance with this Policy, in particular 4.1 above, and in accordance with the Museum and Archive Committee's normal standing orders.

- 5.2 Items offered to the Museum and Archive as gifts or bequests will not normally be accepted if there are significant resource implications, or they are subject to any restrictive covenant or special conditions, such as that they be displayed in a particular way. In exceptional circumstances, if the Mackintosh Curator or the Archivist feels that the item(s) in question are of over-riding importance, the Museum and Archive Committee may be asked to approve the acquisition of a specific item to which conditions are attached. A general exception to this rule will be deemed to exist in respect of restrictive covenants or conditions intended only to ensure the permanent protection of the item concerned in the Museum and Archive's collections, such as restrictions placed upon any legal powers of disposal that the Museum and Archive may have; under such circumstances, the Mackintosh Curator or Archivist may reasonably recommend that the Museum and Archive Committee accept the gift or bequest in question. Where conditions impact on the wider policies of the Glasgow School of Art or have resource implications, these proposed acquisitions will be referred to the Director.
- 5.3 All accessions will be recorded according to the Documentation Procedure Manual.

## **6.0 Collecting Area**

- 6.1 The Collecting Area for the Museum and Archive will be limited to chiefly Scottish art, design and architecture and material relating directly to The Glasgow School of Art's activities and personnel.
- 6.2 The period of time to which the collections relate will be almost exclusively 1845 - present.
- 6.3 Where the Museum seeks to collect the work of "local" artists or to acquire "local" views, the area defined at 3.1 above will normally be used as the basis for decisions.
- 6.4 Acquisitions outside the current stated policy should be made in very exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the Museum and Archive Committee having regard to the interests of other museums and record repositories.

## **7.0 Acquisition Procedures**

- 7.1 The Museum and Archive will only collect material for which they can provide appropriate storage and access facilities.
- 7.2 The Museum and Archive will take account of the collecting policies of other museums, record repositories, and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialisms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.  
  
Specific reference is made to the following institutions: Glasgow Museums, Glasgow City Archives, Hunterian Art Gallery, University of Glasgow, University of Strathclyde, Glasgow Caledonian University and the Victoria and Albert Museum.
- 7.3 In seeking to acquire records the Archivist will respect the principles of archival integrity.
- 7.4 No attempt will be made to secure the acquisition or removal of any material held in another museum or record repository, except with the consent of the owner of the material and in consultation with the Mackintosh Curator or Archivist.
- 7.5 Items made in, at some point used within, or otherwise provenanced to the Museum and Archives Collecting Area, may be acquired, regardless of their location at the time of acquisition. Where this involves the collection of items from a place within the geographical sphere of influence of another museum or record repository, a principle of open actions and good communications will apply.
- 7.6 In an emergency, and to ensure the preservation locally of important material, the Mackintosh Curator or Archivist are exceptionally authorised to collect material from outside the Museum and Archive's stated collecting area, relating to those parts of the general area not yet covered by any museum service or record repository. Such material is acquired on the understanding that it may be transferred to other museums or record repositories at a future time.

## **DISPOSALS**

### **8.0 General Principles of Disposal**

- 8.1 By definition, the Museum and Archive have a long-term purpose and should possess (or intend to acquire) permanent collections in relation to their stated objectives. The governing body accepts the principle that, except for sound curatorial or archival reasons, there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in the Museum and Archive collections.

### **9.0 Reasons for Disposal**

Only under exceptional circumstances will the disposal of any item from the collections be permissible. These circumstances might include:

- 9.1 To remove from the collections any item which is too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any further use for the purposes of the Museum or Archive.
- 9.2 To improve the curatorial care of the collections by the disposal of duplicate or unprovenanced material of low intrinsic relevance to the Acquisition Policy.
- 9.3 To transfer to the ownership of another Accredited museum or to a record repository any items which, by reasons of changes in public, social or educational need, administrative responsibility, development priorities, or the establishment of a new Accredited museum or record repository, the Mackintosh Curator or Archivist advises the Museum and Archive Committee would be more appropriately placed elsewhere.
- 9.4 In those cases where the museum or archive is legally free to dispose of an item (if this is in doubt, advice will be sought) it is agreed that any decision to sell or otherwise dispose of material from the collection or archive will be taken only after due consideration.
- 9.5 Decisions to dispose of items will not be made with the principal aim of generating funds.

### **10.0 Authority for Disposal**

- 10.1 No museum item or archival collection may be disposed of without the specific authority of the Museum and Archive Committee. Such a decision will be the responsibility of the Museum and Archive Committee acting on the advice of the Mackintosh Curator or Archivist and not of any person acting alone. Where significant disposals are proposed, these should be referred to the Director.
- 10.2 The Museum or Archive will establish that it is legally free to dispose of a museum item or archive collection. Any decision to dispose of material will be taken only after due consideration.
- 10.3 If the disposal of a quantity of similar or duplicate material is proposed, the Museum and Archive Committee may, however, give the Mackintosh Curator or Archivist delegated authority to act in the specific, once a general principle has been approved.

10.4 Where recommendations concerning the disposal of museum items or archive collections are to be made, it is understood that there will need to be certain preliminary investigations before a report can usefully be brought before the Museum and Archive Committee in the first instance. This may include such matters as obtaining valuations, seeking the views of donors, and contacts with other Accredited Museums or record repositories which may be interested in accepting transfers. Within the terms of this policy, it is understood that the Mackintosh Curator or Archivist has authority to act in this way, without prejudice to the Museum and Archive Collection's eventual decision.

#### **11.0 Disposal of Purchases, Gifts and Bequests**

11.1 When disposal of a museum object or archive collection is being considered, it must be established if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant.

11.2 Items given or bequeathed will not normally be disposed of without prior consultation with the original donors or their families within the first generation, and wherever possible their approval should be obtained to the course of action proposed. This is, however, a matter of courtesy rather than a legal requirement. The Mackintosh Curator or Archivist shall be entitled to waive this requirement where all reasonable efforts to trace a donor have failed, and additionally where no details of the donor exist.

11.3 In appropriate circumstances, having taken account of the procedure set out in paragraphs 7.6 and 10.4 of this Policy, the Mackintosh Curator or the Archivist may recommend the return of an item or archive collection to its original donor.

#### **12.0 Disposal Procedure**

12.1 Once a decision to dispose of material in the collections has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift, exchange or sale, directly to other Accredited (or Registered) Museums or record repositories likely to be interested in its acquisition.

12.2 If the material is not acquired by any Accredited (or Registered) Museums or record repositories to which it was offered directly, then the museum and archive community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal and/or the Society of Archivists' Newsletter, and in other professional journals where appropriate.

12.3 The announcement will indicate the number and nature of specimens or items involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums or record repositories. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the Museum or Archive may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations.

### **13.0 Disposal by Destruction**

- 13.1 The destruction of a museum item will only be acceptable if it has been seriously damaged, or has deteriorated beyond the point of further usefulness to the collection. The decision to de-accession in this way must be authorised by the Museum and Archive Committee and/or the GSA Board of Governors acting on the advice of the Mackintosh Curator. The item will need to be formally de-accessioned and the destruction must be carried out in a discreet, confidential and permanent fashion.
- 13.2 If the Archivist intends to destroy or return to the owner or donor any duplicate or ephemeral material this will be made clear at the time of transfer.

### **14.0 Procedure Following Disposal**

- 14.1 Full records and photographs will be kept of all disposals from the School's Museum and Archive collections. Where items have been disposed of, this shall be recorded in the appropriate register.
- 14.2 Where a museum item or archive collection is transferred to another Accredited Museum or record repository, all the associated documentation must accompany the item or follow within a period of one month. Where appropriate, this will include any photographic records. The School will retain on file copies of key sections of the documentation for future reference. In the case of museum items, this will be in accordance with the SPECTRUM Procedure on de-accession and disposal for museum items.
- 14.3 Any money received by the Museums and Archive Committee as the result of the sale of a museum item must be used for the benefit of the collection. Normally this will mean it is placed in the Purchase Fund and used for the acquisition of further items but in exceptional cases improvements relating to the care of collections may be justifiable. Advice on these cases will be sought from MLA.

### **15.0 Repatriation and Restitution**

Not applicable

### **16.0 Review**

This Policy is subject to review by the Museum and Archive Committee and approval by the GSA Board of Governors within 5 years.

## Model Definitions

1. The Glasgow School of Art is defined as those premises, staff and collections of original material which may from time to time be the responsibility of the Mackintosh Curator and Archivist. The term "Museum" is used in a functional sense, and may at all times be taken to subsume the terms "Gallery", "Art Gallery", "Heritage Centre" or otherwise as appropriate.
2. "Collections" are defined as:  
  
*"any item entered in the Accession Registers of (the) Museum, whether as gift, or purchase, together with any item not entered in the Accession Registers, but in the possession of (the) Museum at (a specified date), which was donated or purchased with the intention that it should become part of the Collections."*  
  
"Valid title" is defined as *"valid legal ownership"*.
3. The Mackintosh Curator is defined as being the professional officer responsible for museum collections to the Museum and Archive Committee at The Glasgow School of Art. The Mackintosh Curator must have a relevant degree, or a diploma in museum studies (or equivalent), or experience of the principles and practice of museum operation and management as may be determined to be acceptable by the Scottish Museums Council.
4. Archives are defined as:  
  
All archives, records or documents, whether individual items, series or collections, and of whatever format or medium.\*
5. Record repository means a record office, library, museum or other institution holding records which are open to public inspection.\*
6. The Archivist is defined as being the professional officer responsible for archive collections to the Museum and Archive Committee at The Glasgow School of Art. The Archivist must have a relevant qualification in archives and records management, or experience of the principles and practice of archives operations and management.

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\* Definitions derived from [The National Archives Standard for Record Repositories First Edition, 2004](#)