



**MUSEUM**  
ACCREDITATION

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Accreditation Scheme for Museums  
and Galleries in the United Kingdom

# **Victoria Art Gallery**

# **Collections**

# **Development**

# **Policy**



Victoria Art Gallery

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Bath & North East  
Somerset Council

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Improving People's Lives

2024

**Name of museum:**

Victoria Art Gallery

**Name of governing body:**

Bath and North East Somerset Council

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

*Insert date.*

**Policy review procedure:**

The collections development policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years.

**Date at which this policy is due for review:**

*Insert date.*

Arts Council England will be notified of any changes to the collections development policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of collections.

# 1

## Relationship to other relevant policies/ plans of the organisation:

1.1 The gallery's statement of purpose is:

**Our mission is** to develop the potential of our collection and building to make art accessible to everyone, by delivering inspirational exhibitions, engaging displays and an exciting, inclusive programme of events and activities.

**We do this because** we believe in art's potential to improve lives by bringing people together, promoting wellbeing and empowering everyone to learn from the past, understand the present and shape the future.

1.2 The governing body will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.

1.3 By definition, the gallery has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the gallery's collection.

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

1.5 The gallery recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Museum Accreditation Standard. This includes using Spectrum primary procedures for collections management. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

1.6 The gallery will undertake due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift or bequest, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the gallery can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

- 1.7 The gallery will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

## 2

### History of the collections

- 1.8 The Victoria Art Gallery opened in 1900 as a municipal gallery for Bath, supported by local politicians and a fundraising campaign amongst local people. The foundations of the collection predate the Victoria Art Gallery; from the early 18<sup>th</sup> century onwards, Bath's Council collected portraits of key local figures and members of the royal family for display in the public buildings. Although many are displayed in Bath's Guildhall rather than on the museum's own premises, they form the core of the public collection. Over the past century and a quarter, many local people have made generous gifts to the Gallery's collection, most notably European works from the executors of Monsignor James Shepherd in 1900, works by Thomas Barker and his contemporaries from local picture dealer Alfred Jones during the 1920s and 19<sup>th</sup> century paintings given by Alice Dorothea Henderson in 1954. Significant groups of porcelain, Delftware and drinking glasses have also entered the collection in that time.
- 1.9 During the past thirty years successive curators have focused the gallery's collecting priorities towards items with a local significance, meaning that our collection has significant gaps in terms of telling the wider story of art in Britain and beyond.

## 3

### An overview of current collections

- 1.10 The Victoria Art Gallery's collections of fine and decorative art date from the 16<sup>th</sup> century to the present day.
- 1.11 The bulk of the collection consists of British drawings, paintings, watercolours and miniatures and silhouettes from the 17<sup>th</sup> to the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There are also small collections of sculpture and European works of art from before 1750. Of particular significance are the collections of prints, drawings and watercolours associated with Georgian Bath, important depictions of aspects of the City of Bath World Heritage Site. Reflecting the history of artistic practice in Bath, we have a significant collection of portraits produced by artists who worked in the local area during the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries and works by artists associated with Bath Academy of Art. The

Kimball Collection, donated by etcher Katharine Kimball in the mid-20th century, consists of 19th and 20th century prints by British and Continental artists. Of particular note is a small collection of rare early lithographic stones by Thomas Barker of Bath.

- 1.12** Our decorative art collections include porcelain, pottery, watches and glass dating from the 17th to the 19th century. The bulk of this material is British and the collections of Delftware and of English drinking glasses are of note.

## 4

### Themes and priorities for future collecting

- 1.13** The gallery wishes to develop, build on and extend the existing collection, in order to create displays relevant to our visitors and that meet their needs. Where possible, duplication of existing holdings should be avoided and items that are likely to go on display on a permanent or rotational basis should be prioritised. Items in need of significant conservation treatment are only acquired in exceptional circumstances.

- 1.14** The gallery has identified the following priorities for acquisition:

- Good quality works by artists of national and international significance that would complement the existing collection and enable us to present a more art historically comprehensive display, especially works by women artists.
- Good quality works by living artists that enable us to continue telling the story of modern British art.
- European paintings to complement our existing holdings and to extend the chronological reach of the collection into and preceding the 18<sup>th</sup> century.
- European modernist works of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that would place artists currently in the collection, such as Paul Klee, within a wider context.
- Prints by 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century artists, especially items that build on our existing holdings of portraits and extend and complement the Kimball Collection of prints beyond the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.
- Works relating to Bath, the history of artistic practice in Bath and depictions of the city and its architectural development, with an emphasis on items that make a significant contribution to filling gaps.
- Topographical works depicting locations in the wider area of Bath and North East Somerset that are currently represented poorly in the collection.

- Works relating to Georgian social history that would extend and complement the holdings on the subject in the collection. As most are works on paper, oil paintings, such as conversation pieces and informal group scenes, would greatly enhance this aspect of the collection.

## 5

### Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

- 5.1** The gallery recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.
- 5.2** The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.
- 5.3** The gallery has systematically reviewed many accessions, particularly of historic furniture, that were once allocated to its collections but were no longer relevant to collection objectives. This resulted in two deaccessioning reports and subsequent disposal of some of the objects. Both of these disposals followed the procedures recommended by the national agencies in being at the time and were the subject of specific reports approved by the relevant Cabinet member on each occasion.
- 5.4** The collection still includes some items that should be considered for deaccessioning, when time and resources allow, in particular a large number of poor-quality drawings and watercolours by amateur artists, of subjects with no local relevance.

## 6

### Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

- 6.1** The gallery recognises its responsibility to work within the parameters of the Museum Association Code of Ethics when

considering acquisition and disposal.

## 7

### Collecting policies of other museums

**7.1** The gallery will take account of the collecting policies of other museums 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 specialism, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

**7.2** Specific reference is made to the following museum(s)/organisation(s):

Tate Britain  
The British Museum  
National Portrait Gallery  
South West Heritage Trust  
Bristol Museum and Art Gallery  
Bath Preservation Trust Museums  
Holburne Museum of Art  
Chippenham Museum

## 8

### Archival holdings

**7.3** The gallery does not have any archival holdings.

## 9

### Acquisition

**9.1** The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

The gallery will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift or bequest, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

**9.2** The gallery will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the 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).

**9.3** 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 will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

## **10 Human remains**

**7.4** The gallery does not hold or intend to acquire any human remains.

## **11 Biological and geological material**

**7.1** The gallery will not acquire any biological or geological material.

## **12 Archaeological material**

**7.5** The gallery will not acquire any archaeological material.

## **13 Exceptions**

**7.6** Any exceptions to the above clauses will only be because the museum is:

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

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

## **14 Spoliation**



**14.1** The gallery 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.

**15**

## **The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains**

**15.1** The gallery’s governing body, acting on the advice of the museum’s professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the ‘Guidance for the care of human remains in museums’ issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case-by-case basis; within its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 16.1-5 will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

**16**

## **Disposal procedures**

- 16.1** All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the Spectrum primary procedures on disposal.
- 16.2** The governing body will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of an item. Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be taken into account.
- 16.3** When disposal of a museum object is being considered, the gallery will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.
- 16.4** When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or as a last resort – destruction.
- 16.5** The decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for the gallery’s collections and collections held by

museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.

- 16.6** A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator or manager of the collection acting alone.
- 16.7** Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 16.8** If the material is not acquired by any accredited museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the MA's Find an Object web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.9** The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects 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. 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 may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 16.10** Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to

and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from the Arts Council England.

- 16.11** The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the collection.
- 16.12** Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with Spectrum procedure on deaccession and disposal.

## Disposal by exchange

- 16.13** The gallery will not dispose of items by exchange.

## Disposal by destruction

- 16.14** If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the governing body may decide to destroy it.
- 16.15** It is acceptable to destroy material of low intrinsic significance (duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.
- 16.16** Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.
- 16.17** Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk

assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.

**16.18** The destruction of objects should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the museum workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, eg the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history file.



Llywodraeth Cymru  
Welsh Government

