



The Dowse Art Museum Collection Policy 2019-2024

1. Summary

This document lays out The Dowse Art Museum's approach to managing and developing its collection. It defines our collection objectives and priorities, approach to acquisitions, donations, disposal, and collection access.

The document will be reviewed by the Director, Senior Curator and Collections Manager every three years and any changes will be reported to the relevant Council officer or elected members of Council as appropriate.

2. Collection overview

The Dowse Art Museum has a significant public art collection with over 3,500 items. It is best known for New Zealand studio craft with one of the largest collections of this type in Aotearoa. The collection of approximately 3,500 objects, includes a diverse range of media with particular strengths in ceramics and jewellery. It is almost exclusively focused on New Zealand practitioners from the early 20th century through to the present time.

The development of The Dowse Art Museum's collecting can be divided into five periods:

- An initial focus on fine arts with a secondary interest in craft (under Directors David Miller and Jim Barr)
- A focus on craft with a secondary interest in fine arts (James Mack, Bob Maysmor)
- A focus on the democratisation of creativity—street art, outsider art, art from the mental health and prison sectors—with secondary interests in craft and design (Tim Walker)
- A focus on fine arts with secondary interests in craft and design (Cam McCracken and Courtney Johnston)
- A present day focus on diversity and in particular Māori and/or female representation, through fine arts and contemporary craft (Karl Chitham)

3. Acquiring and accessioning works for the permanent collection

Works proposed for acquisition must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The work is representative of the artist's practice
- The work has strong exhibition appeal
- The work expands an area of strength in our permanent collection
- The work was shown in or commissioned for a Dowse exhibition

The Dowse's focus is to collect recently-made work for the permanent collection. We are open to acquiring the work of artists and makers who are currently studying or have recently graduated, particularly in two of our most well represented collections, ceramics and jewellery. Backfilling (ie. acquiring historical works or pieces from earlier in a living artist's career) for the permanent collection is not a priority but may happen under exceptional circumstances or through donation/bequest.

Further to this, The Dowse is particularly interested in the work of artists who are moving between traditional art/craft definitions through their use of materials or conceptual approach. This is an approach that enables us to focus on the existing strengths of the collection and build a coherent whole that reflects the history and objectives of The Dowse Art Museum to create meaningful cultural experiences.

When considering works for acquisition the following principles will be followed:

- We collect original works of art, not copies (bearing in mind that multiple originals - such as prints, photographs and film - are also recognised as works of art)
- There is a clear and detailed provenance available for the work, including certainty around ownership and access to the copyright holder for clearing reproduction rights
- We collect works that are in original condition, not works that have been extensively restored, conserved or reworked
- We avoid acquiring works that require significant conservation work to be brought to an exhibitible standard
- We consider a work's ongoing conservation needs as part of the acquisition process
- We consider the limitations of collection management and storage resources when acquiring or accepting a work
- We ensure a fair price is paid for works bought for the collection
- We seek external advice when we do not have the internal expertise to evaluate a work
- We will encourage the artist to gift preparatory work or documentation for our records that will complement our understanding of the work in future
- We will expect the artist to grant copyright clearance for non-commercial reproduction of the

work online and in print

- There are no restrictions in place that will make it difficult for us to store, exhibit, reproduce or loan the work
- Items or collections will not be accepted on 'permanent loan', a term which has no legal status

We will not acquire any object unless it is satisfied that the object 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. This includes New Zealand.

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 came into force on 1st May 2007, New Zealand museums and galleries will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The Dowse will be guided by the New Zealand national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property based on the Protected Objects Act 2006.

The Dowse will use the statements of principles regarding Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period as described in UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects (Rome, 1995) and UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, both adopted by the New Zealand Government in 2007.

In an emergency, and to ensure the preservation of important material, The Dowse will accept and store items from outside stated collecting areas. Such material is acquired on the understanding that it may be transferred to other galleries at a future time.

4. Bequests and donations to the permanent collection

When considering works for **donation or bequest** the same principles will be followed for when considering acquisitions – see section 3.

All offers of gift/bequest will be considered against the Donation/Loan checklist (see appendix 3)

5. Disposal and deaccession

The Dowse Art Museum has a long-term purpose, as do its collections. The Hutt City Council accepts the principle that, there is a strong presumption against the deaccession and disposal of any items in the Museum's permanent collection, other than in exceptional circumstances (see Reasons for Deaccession and Disposal).

The Dowse may, from time to time, examine its existing collections and identify works of art that, do

not meet the general level of the collection. If it is found that such works do not enhance The Dowse's holdings, but rather tend to lower the overall level of quality, then The Dowse may choose to deaccession them from its collections and to dispose of them by the most appropriate means.

The Dowse will exercise care and caution in evaluating the merit of an object when it is considered for deaccession or disposal. The Director will consult where appropriate with iwi and/or appropriate external experts. Disposals shall not be contemplated in response to current trends, on the basis of any individual's personal taste, or in a hasty manner.

The Dowse shall not dispose of objects directly to Hutt City Council staff, members of the Friends or Foundation, Councilors or their immediate families or any other persons directly connected to The Dowse by any method.

Gifts and bequests will only be removed from the collection after The Dowse is satisfied that every effort has been made to locate and obtain the approval of the donor, surviving family of the donor or the appropriate trustees.

Reasons for Deaccession and Disposal

Decisions to deaccession and dispose of items will not be made with the principal aim of generating funds. Financially-motivated disposal risks damaging the public's and artists' long-term confidence in The Dowse as a safe and respected repository for New Zealand's cultural heritage. As a member of ICOM (the International Council of Museums), The Dowse will adhere to their Code of Ethics which states in regards to deaccession:

2.16 Income from Disposal of Collections

Museum collections are held in public trust and may not be treated as a realisable asset. Money or compensation received from the deaccessioning and disposal of objects and specimens from a museum collection should be used solely for the benefit of the collection and usually for acquisitions to that same collection

Items may only be considered for deaccession for one or more of the following reasons:

- To remove from the collections any item which is deemed no longer suitable for display, for example the object is too badly damaged or deteriorated.
- To improve the quality of the collection by removing duplicate or inferior works or works for which a clear provenance cannot be established.
- To transfer to the ownership of another appropriate institution better placed to hold the item.
- The work is known to be a fake, forgery or copy.
- There is clear evidence that the work was accessioned in error.
- The Dowse is unable to adequately care for, display or store an item.

Any money received by Hutt City Council as the result of the sale of a collection item must be used for the benefit of the collection. Disposals will not be undertaken for the purposes of short-term financial gain or to generate funds for other activities in The Dowse or other Council operation. Any funds generated will be used for either acquisition of future items or for improvements relating to the care of collections.

Authority for Disposal

Any decision to deaccession and dispose of a collection item will be referred first to the Director's manager and then, if appropriate, to the Chief Executive Officer and Council members of the Hutt City Council.

Means of disposal

In the first instance, works will be offered for return to the artist, descendants of the artist, the donor, or descendants of the donor (as appropriate).

Should the parties above not be able to be contacted (after full effort) or decline the work, in the second instance, effort will be made to ensure the work remains in the public domain by offering it to another gallery, museum, or public institution.

Should the work not be wanted by a public institution, in the third instance the work may be offered for sale through a public auction house. Valuations will be produced prior to sale and shared with Council executives and Councilors of the Hutt City Council, as appropriate.

The destruction of a collection 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 deaccession and dispose of in this way must be authorised by the Hutt City Council acting on the advice of the Director. The destruction must be carried out in a discreet, confidential and permanent fashion.

Full records and photographs will be kept of all disposals from the collection in the object file and on the collection management database.

6. Collection Access and Documentation

The Dowse currently has a single permanent collection that is bolstered by a small number of significant long-term loan collections (see Appendix 1).

These items are:

- collected with the purpose of forming a long-term record of the development of contemporary

art, craft and design in New Zealand and/or the history of The Dowse Art Museum.

- accessioned, stored and exhibited at the highest standards of preservation that can be achieved
- documented in our Collections Management system as well as in hard copy object files
- made available for other institutions to exhibit, pending the provision of an appropriate facilities report and insurance cover can be provided.
- made available to researchers under appropriate conditions
- only considered for deaccession and disposal in exceptional circumstances as stated in section 5

In previous years The Dowse has also had the following:

- A Study collection that had items that complemented and were directly related to the understanding of items in the permanent collection and that were usually not original works of art, and may have included preparatory material
- A Tactile collection that were objects acquired for use in education and research and could be handled and examined without the usual limitations of best practice collection care and management practices.

Both these collections have been absorbed into the permanent collection or have been redistributed or disposed of in an appropriate way.

Glossary

Accessioning – the formal process of registering an object as part of the museum’s permanent collection

Acquisition – the formal process of obtaining an object for the Dowse collections. (via purchase, donation or bequest)

Acquisitions policy – formal statement outlining the types of material that a museum will acquire for its permanent collection.

Bequest - is the act of giving property by will.

Collection policy– the museum’s fundamental document governing the scope and limitations of its intended collection, together with standards for its acquisition and documentation.

Conservation – maximising the endurance or minimising the deterioration of an object over time, with as little change to the object as possible.

Copyright – legislation governing the sole right to reproduce an original literary, dramatic, musical or artistic work.

Deaccessioning – the formal procedure involved when a decision has been made to de-register an item from the permanent collection.

Disposal – the formal process of physically removing an item from the permanent collection.

Donation – a gift or bequest of artefacts, specimens or works of art and/or funds in support of the museum’s mission.

Gift – donation to the museum’s collections.

ICOM – The International Council of Museums