



## ACQUISITION & DISPOSAL POLICY

**Name of organisation:** Crafts Council Collection

**Governing body:** Crafts Council Trustee Board

**Date approved by governing body:** 2008

**Date at which policy due for review:** 2013

### 1. HISTORY, SCOPE AND PURPOSE OF THE EXISTING COLLECTION

#### 1.1 Crafts Council Collection

The Crafts Council Collection began in 1972, a year after the Crafts Council (then the Crafts Advisory Committee) was established. Its purpose was to buy work from makers working principally in England, Wales and Scotland. The Collection evolved in a fairly ad hoc way through the purchase of objects from the Council's touring shows in the early 70s as a means to offer support and encouragement to emerging makers. The first objects in the Collection date from the time of the *British Potters' Exhibition*, when significant pieces by such potters as Bernard Leach, Hans Coper and Lucie Rie were acquired.

The Collection numbers over 1300 objects spanning all the main media (excluding fashion). In 2008 there are 55 pieces in the category of bookbindings, calligraphy and lettering, 97 pieces of glass, 284 items of jewellery, 80 pieces of metal, 481 ceramic objects, 172 textiles, 160 objects in the category of furniture, wood, baskets, automata and toys. Many internationally acclaimed makers are represented and the aim has been to maintain a balance between purchasing work from young makers and those already well established. It is not constituted as a survey of the crafts overall, but reflects a wide and lively spectrum of activity in contemporary Craft. The Crafts Council accepts the definition of craft in its widest sense, from its interface with cutting edge design on the one hand, to its crossover with fine art on the other.

The Crafts Council Collection, unlike the majority of museum collections of craft, is independent of an historic decorative arts collection which might dictate the choice of contemporary material, e.g. The Whitworth Art Gallery which has a special remit to acquire art textiles, building on its existing collections. Many contemporary craft collections in museums are currently specialising in particular media, e.g. Manchester City Art Gallery (Furniture and Lighting); Nottingham Castle Museum (Art Textiles); Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery (Metalwork). The Crafts Council Collection, on the other hand, takes craft in all the main media into consideration and would not acquire exclusively in a single area.



## **1.2 Geographical and chronological boundaries**

The scope of the Collection is craft between circa 1960 and the present day, made in the UK.

## **1.3 Purpose of Collection**

The primary objectives for the Collection are to:

- i) support the aims of the Crafts Council.
- ii) benefit the widest possible audience by using the Collection through Crafts Council projects, including long and short term loans, partnership projects, touring exhibitions, displays on site and to support educational projects, published research and study.
- iii) develop a collection demonstrating excellence and quality in contemporary UK craft.
- iv) stimulate an awareness of high quality work on the part of a wide audience.
- v) record key moments in craft practice through acquiring work from major exhibitions and from makers who are at an important stage of development in their career.

## **2. NEW COLLECTING POLICY**

### **2.1 Acquisition Panel**

The Acquisition Panel comprises the Director, Trustee, Director of Programmes, Exhibitions and Collection Manager, Curator, Registrar and Administrator (minutes). They will meet twice a year in September and February to discuss the proposals made by the Acquisition Advisors and decide on the new acquisitions.

The Acquisition Advisors are responsible for giving advice to the Acquisition Panel on new acquisitions for the Crafts Council Collection. The group comprises of eight to ten advisors including practicing craftspeople, specialists, academics and museum and gallery professionals from different craft disciplines and regions. They will be asked to propose a maximum of five works twice a year. Advisors will serve for a maximum term of two years. For the purposes of good governance and in order to avoid any potential conflicts of interest, the Acquisition Advisors are required to register any interests which may have a bearing on their responsibilities in respect to proposing work for the Crafts Council Collection. Suggested new acquisitions by internal Crafts Council staff will follow the same procedure as proposals by Advisors.



## 2.2 Criteria

The Collection is not a survey of craft, but reflects a wide and lively spectrum of activity in contemporary work. The acquired work has to be ambitious, innovative and show new approaches to making in keep with the Crafts Council's overall focus. The Crafts Council will also collect material to support the acquired objects including drawings, sketchbooks, photos, notes and videos subject to the ability to provide suitable storage and conservation.

The criteria for acquisition are:

- i) the quality of the work: work should demonstrate excellence in skill of making, handling of materials and innovation of ideas.
- ii) work made by makers domicile in the UK.<sup>1</sup>
- iii) work that marks an important stage in the development of an individual, or demonstrates new areas of activity in a particular craft.
- iv) work will not be bought retrospectively, but a leeway of five years is acceptable.
- v) work by both established and emerging makers will be considered.

The following work will not be considered for acquisition (unless in exceptional circumstances as agreed by SMT and panel):

- i) work of students.
- ii) work by fashion designers who do not producing their own fabrics.
- iii) work by Trustees.

## 2.3. Acquisitions procedures

- i) Decisions on acquisitions will be made by the Acquisition Panel, consisting of the Director, Trustee, Director of Programmes, Exhibitions and Collection Manager, Curator and Registrar.
- ii) An annual report will be presented to the Trustees.
- iii) The balance of the different craft disciplines represented in the Collection needs to be considered, occasionally concentrating on under-represented areas or particularly interesting craft disciplines.
- iv) Practical considerations which need to be taken into account are: physical condition of the work, available storage space, costs and provenance of the object.
- v) A work will not be acquired unless at least one person on the Acquisition Panel has seen it.
- vi) The Crafts Council will not acquire any object unless the Curator of the Collection is satisfied that the Crafts Council can acquire a valid

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<sup>1</sup> Makers must have ILR (Indefinite Leave to Remain), commonly known as permanent UK residency.



title to the item in question, and that in particular it 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.

- vii) The Crafts Council will not acquire by any direct or indirect means biological and geological specimens collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.
- viii) The Crafts Council will not acquire any archaeological material.
- ix) If applicable, ethic issues of restoration, conservation and intervention must be agreed with maker and documented.
- x) Under exceptional circumstances the Crafts Council will commission work under the normal criteria for acquisition.
- xi) The Crafts Council will consider Gifts under the following criteria:
  - a) Gifts must be approved by the panel according to the normal criteria for acquisition.
  - b) Gifts have to be unconditional; this includes objects (partly) funded by the Craft Council Patrons.
- xii) Acquisitions under £500 can be made by the Curator with the agreement of the Director of Programmes and the Exhibitions and Collection Manager.

### **3. COLLECTING POLICIES OF OTHER MUSEUMS**

The Crafts Council will endeavour to take due account of the collecting policies of other museums collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields and will consult with such organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialisms, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and resources.

Institutions with whom the Crafts Council maintains close contact over acquisition:

Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery  
Craft Study Centre, Farnham  
Manchester Art Gallery  
Nottingham Castle Museum  
ShIPLEY Art Gallery, Gateshead  
The Potteries Museum, Stoke-on-Trent  
The Victoria & Albert Museum, London  
The Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester



#### 4. POLICY REVIEW PROCEDURE

The Crafts Council's Acquisition and Disposal Policy will be published and made available on the Crafts Council website and will be reviewed every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above.<sup>ii</sup>

#### 5. DISPOSAL PROCEDURES

5.1 By definition, the Crafts Council has a long-term purpose and should possess permanent collections in relation to its stated objectives. There is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in the Crafts Council's Collection except as set out below.

5.2 In those cases where the Crafts Council 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 will be taken only after due consideration. Decisions to dispose of items will not be made with the principle aim of generating funds. Once a decision to dispose of an item has been taken, priority will be given to retaining the item within the public domain and with this in view it will be offered first, by exchange, gift or sale to Accredited museums before disposal to other interested individuals or organisations is considered.

5.3 In cases in which an arrangement for the exchange, gift or sale of material is not being made with an individual Accredited museum, the museum community will be advised of the intention to dispose of material. This will normally be through an announcement in the Museums Association's *Museums Journal* and other appropriate professional journals if appropriate. The announcement will indicate the number and nature of objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed.

5.4 A decision to dispose of an object, whether by exchange, sale, gift or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the Collection), will be the responsibility of the Crafts Council's Trustee Board, acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the Curator of the Collection acting alone. Full records will be kept of all such decisions and the items involved and

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<sup>ii</sup> If the status of the Collection changes i.e. Accredited then the Museums Libraries, Archives Council will be notified of any changes to the Acquisition & Disposal Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of the Crafts Council Collection.



proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable.

- 5.5** Any monies received by the Crafts Council from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the Collection. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions but in exceptional cases improvements relating to the care of the Collection may be justifiable. Advice on these cases will be sought from The Museums Libraries Archives Council.