



## ACQUISITION & DISPOSAL POLICY

<b>Name of organisation:</b>	Crafts Council Collection
<b>Governing body:</b>	Crafts Council Board of Trustees
<b>Date approved by governing body:</b>	July 2014
<b>Date of Addenda:</b>	April 2016
<b>Date at which policy due for review:</b>	2019

### 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 1600 objects spanning all the main media (excluding fashion). In 2014 there are 59 pieces in the category of book bindings, calligraphy and lettering, 131 pieces of glass, 393 items of jewellery, 111 pieces of metal, 568 ceramic objects, 193 textiles, 183 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, that is; made in the UK; originated in UK, or made by a UK maker (either as domicile or citizen). Work can be acquired from both established and emerging makers.



### **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.
- vi) Position contemporary UK craft as an important and distinct discipline within UK creative, cultural and fiscal economy.

## **2. NEW COLLECTING POLICY**

### **2.1 Acquisition Panel:**

a) The Crafts Council Collection: CEO, Trustee, Director of Creative Programmes, Head of Exhibitions and Collections, Keeper of Collections

b) Handling Collection: Director of Creative Programmes, Head of Learning & Talent Development, Keeper of Collections<sup>i</sup>, Exhibition & Collection Projects Curator

The Acquisition Panel convenes to discuss proposals and approve acquisitions.

#### **Advisory Group:**

An invited panel of cross sector specialists representing different knowledge, regional perspectives and disciplines will participate in a 'current trends' round table which will be convened at least once a year to inform and support the acquisition process.

### **2.2 Criteria**

The Collection is not a survey of craft, and so reflects a wide spectrum of activity in contemporary work. The acquired work has to be ambitious, innovative and show new approaches to making in keeping 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 variable media subject to the ability to provide suitable storage and conservation.

Prior to 2014 work was only acquired from makers who were UK based at time of purchase, and the status of 'UK domicile' formed the criteria for the work of a maker to be considered for acquisition.

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<sup>i</sup> Or Head of Exhibitions and Collections, if Keeper unavailable.



The 2014 policy review includes a move to enable works by makers who may be domiciled elsewhere, at time of acquisition, to be considered. The criteria for the work, is that it must represent a key moment in UK making, and this can include via influence (i.e. maker lectures, mentors in UK), or that the work represents a significant development in craft practice that has an impact on the practice of UK makers.

This is a significant shift to the policy for Acquisition of the Crafts Council, but is important and relevant and in direct response to the way that makers work, and the mobility of contemporary practice.

The criteria for acquisition are:

- I) Innovation: in skills, materials, intention,
- II) Quality: demonstrating excellence in skill of making, handling of materials
- III) Key moments: marking a key moment or new area of activity in contemporary practice of either an individual maker, or a craft discipline; including influential works.
- IV) We do not acquire by any direct or indirect means biological or 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.
- V) The Crafts Council will not acquire any archaeological material.
- VI) The Crafts Council will commission work under the normal criteria for acquisition.
- VII) The balance of different craft disciplines represented in the collection is considered, as are practical considerations such as condition of the work, storage requirements, potential on-costs relating to care and maintenance.

There are five strands of acquisition within the Acquisition Programme:

**1. Core programme**

Core Acquisition Programme: offers a snapshot of any given moment of acquisition. The funds (£25K assumed retained from 2013 budget) are to facilitate the purchase of new works to continue to build the collection as one that reflects a historic overview of key moments in contemporary craft practice in the UK. Under this strand of acquisition works will not be acquired retrospectively, but a leeway of five years is acceptable.

**2. Off –Plinth: capturing the zeitgeist** – subject to external/raised funds

Off Plinth programme acquires ambitious, ephemeral, installation, cross platform/variable media, or large-scale, experimental work.

While the Crafts Council Collection holds examples of excellence in skill and making, and represents key moments in the career of a number of emerging and established makers, it is clear that there is an increasing type of contemporary craft practice that is not currently being collected.



Further, as this work is experimental and ambitious in process and often scale, it is not currently being acquired into public collections.

As the Crafts Council is the national agency for the support and development of contemporary craft in UK, in particular England, a programme to acquire such work and in turn make it available to museums and galleries across the country through CC Collection loans programme, would support both regional collections and also the work of makers who are pushing the boundaries with avant-garde approach to their practice and discipline.

The programme would include:

- the acquisition of works
  - the acquisition of supporting documentation, archive material and process information;
  - professional knowledge development within the sector through establishing and sharing experience, good practice and standards.
  - commissioned films documenting the making and installation of work (or group of works) subject to funds
3. **Plug the Gap** programme – subject to external funds.  
This strand of acquisition is in line with the organisational objective to move from a 'snapshot' collection to a fuller story of the best of UK contemporary craft, through identifying 'omissions' in the Collection of disciplines, materials, skills and makers. The Crafts Council may hold some works but, for makers, the journey of their career and practice is not fully captured, documented and represented, a discipline or skill may not be fully represented, and certain materials may be unrepresented.
4. **Strategic iconic works:** purpose is to develop the collection a national resource by increasing holdings of popular works to make available for loan. Emphasis is on supporting though loan from CC collection of such works, the programmes of other organisations. It is expected that as a national organisation, the Crafts Council has numbers of core and key pieces by the most popular makers available to borrow.
5. **Commissioned work:** the strategic decision has been taken to confirm that any art works commissioned by the organisation and or undertaken as part of a Crafts Council project should be considered for acquisition. This also applies to partnership projects and must be openly discussed and agreed by all partners involved.

Work acquired will be accessioned to either the Primary Collection or Handling Collection as determined by the Acquisition Panel.

### 2.3. Acquisitions procedures



1. Decisions on acquisitions are made by the appropriate Acquisition Panel
2. An annual report will be presented to the Trustees
3. Work will not be acquired unless at least one person on the Acquisition Panel has seen it.
4. If applicable, ethical issues of restoration, conservation and intervention must be agreed with the maker and documented.
5. The Crafts Council will not acquire any object unless the Keeper of the Collection is satisfied that the Crafts Council can acquire a valid 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.
6. The Crafts Council will consider Gifts and Bequests under the following criteria:
  - a) Work is approved by the panel according to the normal criteria for acquisition
  - b) The gift or bequest is unconditional, approved credit lines excepted: this includes objects funded or partly funded by Crafts Council Patrons
7. Acquisitions under £1,000 can be made by the Keeper of Collections with the agreement of the Head of Exhibitions and Collections.

### **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:

- Aberdeen Museum and Art Gallery
- Birmingham Museum & Art Gallery
- Craft Study Centre, Farnham
- Exeter Museum and Art Gallery
- National Museum of Scotland
- National Museum of Wales
- Manchester Art Gallery
- Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art
- Nottingham Castle Museum
- Plymouth City Museum and Art Gallery
- Shipley Art Gallery, Gateshead
- The Potteries Museum, Stoke-on-Trent
- The Victoria & Albert Museum, London
- The Whitworth Art Gallery, University of Manchester
- York Museums

### **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 Keeper of the Collection acting alone. Full records will be kept of all such decisions 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.
- 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 Arts Council England.

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<sup>ii</sup> If the status of the Collection changes i.e. becomes Accredited/Designated then the Arts Council England 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.