

Art and Historical Artefacts Collection Management Policy

Effective date: 18 June 2025

Last reviewed/updated: 18 June 2025

Next review date: Trinity Term 2028

Policy owner: Aimee Burlakova (College Librarian)

Approved by: Governing Body on 18 June 2025

1. Purpose

Objective:

This policy has been created to establish clear guidelines and principles for the management of works of art and historical artefacts within St Antony's College, covering acquisition, care and preservation, registration and access, deaccessioning and disposal. This policy aims to ensure responsible stewardship, following legal and ethical standards in alignment with the College's educational and cultural objectives as well as financial priorities and limitations.

Scope:

This policy applies to art and historical artefacts already held within the College and any such items which may be purchased, donated, or loaned in future. This policy has been created to assist all who receive or are offered items or seek to purchase/loan art/artefacts on behalf of the College, those directly involved in managing and maintaining collections, and those with governance responsibilities (principally, the Management Executive Team, MET). It may also be of interest to those who wish to sell, donate or lend items to the College.

This policy applies to College art and artefacts in all media, and all sizes, whether held inside College buildings or within gardens or other outdoor areas within the College estate.

This policy does not apply to art or artefacts which are privately owned by members and displayed within personal offices or bedrooms.

2. Policy statement

When considering new art/historical artefacts and retention of existing collections, the College adheres to the following principles.

2.1 Eligibility criteria:

Items which are kept within the College (temporarily or in perpetuity) must ordinarily achieve one or more of the following:

- Promote international understanding

- Celebrate/reflect/document the College, its community, history, values
- Enrich College spaces/enhance College life
- Improve or enhance the student experience
- Support educational objectives.

The College will not ordinarily accept, keep or display items which*:

- present a potential biological, chemical or physical hazard
- could be deemed to have racist, obscene or otherwise disturbing content
- could cause offence or distress to actual or cultural descendants of the makers or owners of the work
- are in poor physical condition/require conservation that is not deemed value for money.

* Such pieces may be displayed in locations with restricted access (through, for example, exhibitions in closed rooms) at the discretion of the MET. Viewers must be given forewarning before exposure to any items which might be hazardous, or be deemed disturbing or offensive.

Apart from portraits of the Founder or former Wardens, the College will not ordinarily display portraits in public areas.

2.2 Conditions of acceptance:

The MET must be satisfied that the following criteria have been met:

- Suitable space is available for display or storage (see section 3.2)
- Adequate insurance cover is/can be provided and is financially viable (suitable funds are available)
- Appropriate security provision and protective equipment is in place or can be supplied (eg secure frames, display cases, stanchions/barriers)
- Transport and display arrangements are logistically viable
- Transport, display, loan/purchase costs are or can be covered (suitable funds are available)
- Agreements with owners/lenders are acceptable and have been adequately recorded
- Information on provenance has been supplied and the MET is satisfied that:
 - a) Acquisition is legal and ethical (see section 4, on compliance and monitoring for further details)
 - b) Reputational risks are low.

3. Procedures

3.1 Acquiring artworks:

Art and historical artefacts can be acquired through three primary channels: purchase, donation, or loan. In all cases, proposed acquisitions must be approved by the MET who will assess each piece against eligibility criteria and conditions of acceptance outlined in the policy statement (section 2).

Items to be displayed in Centres must be agreed by Centre Management Committees before the MET are consulted.

In all cases a written statement which provides the following details must be submitted to the MET for consideration:

- A detailed description of the item (artist, title, date of creation, medium, number of items, value of each item) and clear, colour photographs.
- An explanation of how the item meets eligibility criteria (see 3.1)
- Sufficient information to ensure conditions of acceptance (see 3.2) are met, including the insurance value.

The College will not purchase items or accept loans or donations with conditions attached which restrict the location or display, or any future deaccessioning.

If the MET is satisfied that the item is eligible and the conditions of acceptance have been met, proposed purchases and donations will be put to the Governing Body.

3.1.1 Purchase

Purchases may be supported through the College's art acquisition fund, appropriate Centre budgets, private donations, and grants. Funding sources must be approved by the MET.

3.1.2. Donation

Conditions of donation:

Before the MET is approached, the source of the donation must be checked by the Development Director. The Committee for the Review of Donations will assess reputational risks if the item is valued in excess of £100,000.

The Development Office must also be informed that a gift has been offered so this can be recorded in the Office's database and if appropriate, the Warden can thank the donor in a suitable manner.

Funding:

Donors are usually responsible for organising and covering the costs of safe delivery.

Additional documentation:

Before a new donation is agreed and received, a Donation Agreement form must be completed by the donor and transferred to the College Archive.

3.1.3 Loan

Conditions of loan:

Items which may be kept in perpetuity are prioritised for investment. However, loans will be considered in exceptional circumstances (eg in support of temporary exhibitions and short-term projects).

The College will not accept indefinite loans; a start and end date must be agreed before proposals are presented to the MET. If an extension to any agreed loan is desired, further approval from the MET must be received and a new end date must be determined.

Funding:

Loan costs must, in most cases, be covered by project funding or by the host Centre from an appropriate source.

Additional documentation:

Before a new loan is agreed and received, documentation detailing the loan agreement must be completed. Ordinarily, the College's own loan agreement form is used. Sufficiently detailed documentation from lenders may, in some cases, provide an adequate substitute.

The MET must receive the following information in addition to that provided for all acquisitions:

- Contact details of the legal owner and contact details of the lender (if different)
- Contact details and address for return
- Purpose of the loan and the proposed venue
- Start and end date of the loan
- The terms and conditions under which the item is loaned (if different to those stipulated in the College's own loan agreement form).

Any extension to an agreed loan must be documented in writing (letter or email) and appended to the original loan agreement form.

Condition reports must be completed by a member of the College and with the owner(s)/lender(s) on the day of delivery and the day of return.

3.2 Care and conservation**Condition reports:**

Condition reports must be completed on arrival of items into the College (and at the end of any loan period if applicable). Where items are to be displayed within Centres, Centre Directors are responsible for ensuring condition reports are completed and transferred to the College Archive (tasks may be delegated to Centre staff). The College Librarian and/or College Archivist and Records Manager will complete condition reports for items outside of Centres.

Storage/display conditions:

In designating locations for display or storage the following must be assessed:

- protection against environmental damage
 - lighting conditions
 - temperature and humidity levels
 - risk of leaks/water ingress
 - risks of fire
 - exposure to pests
- protection from accidental damage
 - proximity to food and drink
 - risk of damage from furniture or close passage of people
- protection against criminal damage.

Action must be taken to address any items at high risk of damage/loss. This may include relocation to other areas within the College, repackaging, acquisition of protective equipment (eg secure frames, display cases, stanchions/barriers), conservation treatments, or deaccessioning.

In some cases, the College Archive and/or Middle East Centre Archive may provide the most suitable home for items which have previously been on display.

Periodic assessments:

Art and historical artefacts must be inspected on a regular basis to determine any changes in location, condition, and ensure appropriate storage/display conditions.

Where items are to be displayed within Centres, Centre Directors are responsible for ensuring regular inspections and for notifying the College Librarian and/or College Archivist and Records Manager of any changes (tasks may be delegated to Centre staff). The College Librarian and/or College Archivist and Records Manager will inspect items outside of Centres.

3.3 Registration and access

Registration:

As soon as an item has been accepted and received by the College (whether purchased, donated, or loaned) it must be registered within the College's art inventory by the College Librarian and/or College Archivist and Records Manager. Each item will be given a number.

Those who receive gifts/offers of gifts on behalf of the College must also inform staff in the Development Office so this can be recorded in their database and if appropriate, the Warden can thank the donor.

Documentation:

Records in any format (digital or hardcopy) which contain relevant information about College art, historical artefacts, and exhibitions held within the College, including registration forms, loan agreements forms, condition reports, and copies of catalogues, must be transferred to the College archives.

Any extension to an agreed loan must be documented in writing (letter or email) and transferred to the archive where it may be appended to the original loan agreement form.

Labels and captions:

To facilitate collection management practices and to ensure access, frames/cases/storage containers of all items that are to be kept in perpetuity, except those made of sensitive materials or of a very small size, must be marked with their inventory number (usually discretely on the reverse/underside in an erasable medium). Where frames/cases/containers cannot be marked, conservation-quality labels which provide inventory numbers/appropriate identification details must be attached.

All displayed items should be accompanied by captions which provide the following information (where known):

- Artist
- Title
- Date of creation
- Medium
- Contextual information (if appropriate, a brief explanation of the subject, theme, cultural and historical significance)
- Provenance, including donor information (if appropriate)
- Inventory number.

3.4 Deaccessioning and disposal

Conditions for deaccessioning:

Items may be deaccessioned if they no longer meet the eligibility criteria and conditions of acceptance listed in section 2, or they are beyond reasonable repair. A proposal for deaccessioning must be approved by the MET, with documentation of the reasons for removal and proposed route of disposal.

The College art inventory must be updated when items are removed; the College Librarian and/or College Archivist and Records Manager must be contacted in advance of any disposal.

Routes of disposal:

Items may be transferred to other institutions. In most circumstances, museums and galleries within Oxford should be offered items before other institutions are approached.

Alternatively, deaccessioned artworks may be sold. The proceeds of any sales will be absorbed into the College's operating budget (or the relevant Centre budget if applicable).

4. Compliance and monitoring

Compliance with this policy, as well as legal and ethical standards, is the responsibility of all members of the College and will be overseen by the MET.

4.1 Trade laws and ethics:

The College will not acquire any item unless it is satisfied that 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.

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, offers of any items that have been illicitly traded will be rejected. The MET 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.

The College will use the 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Holocaust and World War II Period: Statement of Principles and Proposed Actions', issued by the National Museum Directors' Conference in 1998, and report on them in accordance with these guidelines.

4.2 Copyright:

The College will not acquire items which breach copyright law. In particular, care must be taken when considering prints and artistic works which reproduce others' creations; all artworks acquired must be free from copyright infringement or the necessary permissions must be obtained.

5. Review and revision

Review Cycle: this policy will be reviewed every three years

Revision History: Created May 2025

6. Related documents

References:

- Combating Illicit Trade: Due diligence guidelines for museums, libraries and archives on collecting and borrowing cultural material states: https://www.obs-traffic.museum/sites/default/files/ressources/files/DCMS_DD_Guidelines.pdf
- the 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Holocaust and World War II Period: Statement of Principles and Proposed Actions', issued by the National Museum Directors' Conference in 1998: <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/spoliation-of-works-of-art-during-the-nazi-holocaust-and-world-war-ii-period-issued-for-non-national-museums/>
- St Antony's College Records Management Policy (upcoming).

7. Contact information

- **Policy Owner:** College Librarian (Aimee Burlakova)
 - **Support:** Further information about this policy can be obtained from the College Librarian
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