

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL
ARTS AND RECREATION DEPARTMENT
ART GALLERY & MUSEUMS
COLLECTING AND DISPOSAL POLICIES 1999-2004
Maritime Extract

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This is a Policy Statement regulating the acquisition and disposal of items for the Collections of Aberdeen City Council's Arts and Recreation Department, Art Gallery and Museums [hereafter the Museums **(1)**]. The adoption and implementation of such a policy for Aberdeen City Council [hereafter the City Council **(2)**] is a recommendation of the Museum Associations Code of Practice for Museums Authorities and a requirement of the Museum and Galleries Commission Registration Scheme.
- 1.2 This represents the aims and plans of the City Council at the time of its adoption in February 1999 and as such will be subject to revision as the Collections **(3)** of the Museums develop. It is, as a result, intended that this policy should be reconsidered at least every five years. The Collecting Areas will be reviewed in two years, in February 2001, and a revised policy will be submitted to the City Council for approval.
- 1.3 This Policy Statement supersedes all previous and existing practices and policies relating to the acquisition and disposal of items for the Collections of the Museums.

COLLECTING POLICY

2.0 GENERAL RULES FOR COLLECTING

- 2.1 The City Council accepts the general principle that it is its responsibility to ensure to the best of its ability that all of the Collections in its care are adequately housed, conserved, documented and accessible.
- 2.2 The Museums will not acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any item unless the Director (4) acting on the City Council's behalf is satisfied that valid title to the item in question can be acquired. In particular, no item will be collected which has been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin, including the United Kingdom, or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned, in violation of that country's laws.
- 2.3 Where an item is offered as a gift in good faith and the prospective donor is uncertain of the identity of the legal owner/s and the Museums are unable to ascertain this as a result of their own reasonable effort, the Director shall be permitted to accept the item, provided a permanent and detailed note of the circumstances and known facts is made at the time of acceptance.
- 2.4 No Biological or Geological specimen will be acquired unless the Director acting on the City Council's behalf is satisfied that it has not been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any Wildlife or Conservation Law or Treaty of the United Kingdom or any other Country, unless acquisition has been specifically authorised by an appropriate outside authority, such as a court.
- 2.5 The City Council accepts the legal principle of 'Bona Vacantia', under which the discovery of antiquities is a matter for report to the Procurator Fiscal. Archaeological material will therefore not be acquired by any means other than allocation to the Museums by the Secretary of State's Finds Disposal Panel, or by the office of the Queen's

and Lord's Treasurer's Remembrancer, unless the Director acting on the City Council's behalf is satisfied that the items in question are of a class of material the discovery of which does not warrant a report to the Procurator Fiscal, have not been claimed by the Crown, or were not found in Scotland.

- 2.6 No excavated or archaeological material discovered outside Scotland will be purchased unless the Director acting on the City Council's behalf can be certain that the circumstances of excavation or recovery did not involve the recent unscientific destruction of, or damage to, ancient monuments, known archaeological sites or places of special scientific or historic interest, or failure to disclose finds to the owner or occupier of the land where found, or to any proper authority.

3.0 RESTRICTIONS ON COLLECTING

- 3.1 The Museums have been subject to increasing budget restrictions in recent years. This has curtailed the ability of the Museums to add items to the Collection. The Works of Art Purchase Budget has been significantly reduced and consequently active collecting through purchase has become even more limited than in previous years. In addition, the increased pressure on the Conservation, Documentation and Reserve Collection Budgets has also led to a reduction in the number of items accepted into the Collection as gifts, bequests or loans.
- 3.2 This Policy Statement recognises that the financial pressures detailed in paragraph 3.1 will continue for the foreseeable future and consequently the restrictions on accepting items into the Collection will remain.

4.0 ACQUISITION PROCEDURES

- 4.1 The Director of Arts and Recreation as the City Council's senior officer responsible for Museums, will normally have delegated authority and responsibility for the acceptance or rejection of potential gifts or bequests to the Museums, for soliciting gifts of material for the Collection within the terms of this policy, and for making recommendations and taking action on the purchase of material in accordance with this Policy and within the City Council's normal standing orders.
- 4.2 The long-term resource implication of all acquisitions will be considered, especially with reference to the documentation, storage, preservation, conservation and display of the object. The decision to accept any acquisition into the Collection will be based both on the Museums ability to allocate the appropriate resources to its long-term preservation, as well as on its importance to a designated collecting area.
- 4.3 Items offered to the Museums as gifts or bequests will not normally be accepted if they are subject to any restrictive covenant or special conditions, such as that they be displayed in a particular way. In exceptional circumstances, if the Director feels that the item[s] in question are of overriding importance, the City Council may be asked to approve the acquisition of a specific item to which conditions are attached.
- 4.4 The acceptance of items on loan, normally for a finite period for display or specific study, may be authorised by the Director acting on the City Council's behalf. In exceptional cases, a privately owned item of major importance that falls within the scope of this Policy may be accepted as a long term loan, whether or not it is required for immediate display or study. No item will be received on "permanent loan", a term which has no legal status. The period of all loans will normally be agreed in writing between the Director and the owner of the item at the time of deposit. Where the term of a loan has expired, it may be renewed or extended for further finite periods, at the discretion of both the owner and the Director.

5.0 COLLECTING AREA

- 5.1 The parameters - thematic, geographical, and chronological within which collections shall be developed are described in detail below and vary from collection to collection [see Collecting Policy by Section]. In many cases, defined geographical parameters would not be appropriate. Where, however geographical parameters would be appropriate and no area is specified within the policy, the general presumption will be that the area for collecting will be the area covered by Aberdeen City Council.
- 5.2 Items made in, at some point used within, or otherwise provenanced within the geographical parameters specified within this policy may be acquired, regardless of their location at the time of acquisition. Where this involves the collection of items from a place within the geographical sphere of influence of another museum, a principle of open actions and good communications will apply.
- 5.3 The Museums recognise the need for co-operation and consultation between national and local museums and art galleries with similar, or overlapping, interests and collecting policies. They shall consult with other appropriate institutions on specific acquisitions where a conflict of collecting objectives is thought possible and, more generally, on defining areas of specialisation. In particular, the Museums recognise the interests of Aberdeenshire Heritage, the Gordon Highlanders Regimental Museum, Grampian Transport Museum and the museum collections of Aberdeen University.

9.0 MARITIME HISTORY

9.1 PRESENT SITUATION

This is a rich and varied collection relating to the maritime history of Aberdeen with reference to the marine trades and industries of the North East of Scotland and the North Sea. The collection consists of over 150 ship models, around 100 builders half models, 200 maritime paintings, the majority of which are ships portraits, thousands of shipbuilders drawings; and the artefacts used in the prime collecting areas of fishing, shipbuilding and the history of the port of Aberdeen. An extensive collection relating to the North Sea oil and gas industry has also been established and a major initiative is to maintain and upgrade this material. Future acquisitions will be considered with reference to the U.K. Maritime Collecting Policy, currently being developed by the Maritime Curator's Group. It is likely that this policy will designate Aberdeen as the prime collector in a number of areas, including the offshore oil and gas industry. However, due to the limited display and storage space available, there is a strong presumption against collecting very large items.

Subject areas not represented in the collection include naval history and marine wildlife. Active collecting will not take place in these areas.

As noted in paragraph 3.1 restrictions on collecting will be influenced by limitations in financial resources over the period of this Policy. However, the Maritime section has been successful in acquiring the bulk of its collections through gift, business sponsorship or substantially subsidised purchase. In this context priority will be given to the North Sea Oil and Gas Industry section (paragraph 9.7) and in acquiring ship models, paintings and photographs with a significant Aberdeen connection.

9.2 ABERDEEN HARBOUR

There is a small collection of items relating to the harbour and its operation. This includes model quay sections; patterns for items such as capstans, and diving equipment of the type used in harbour maintenance. There is also a photographic record of the harbour landmarks, such as the sheerlegs. Objects held in the Science and Technology Collection reflect the industries of the hinterland served by the harbour, such as granite and agriculture. Therefore, items relating to this hinterland are not collected by Maritime History.

Future Collecting

Items which reflect the harbour and its operation will continue to be collected. Material relating to cargo and cranes would be of particular interest as this area is poorly represented at present.

9.3 FISHING

The fishing collections comprise artefacts, photographs and models on the main subject areas of this primary industry of the North East of Scotland. This includes great line fishing, life and work in small fishing communities, trawling, fish processing, herring fishing, fisheries research and the environmental impact of fishing.

Future Collecting

Every opportunity will be taken to fill gaps in the collection but cognisance of other North East museums will be taken so that policies do not come into conflict. Particular attention will be paid to recording current fishing activity out of Aberdeen.

9.4 LEISURE

This collection consists of a small number of high quality pond models, which were sailed at Duthie Park Lake

Future Collecting

Passive collecting will continue in this area. Items relating to contemporary leisure activities, such as windsurfing, would be of particular interest.

9.5 LIFE AND WORK AT SEA

This diverse collection covers life aboard a range of vessels from trawlers to clipper ships. Objects include navigational instruments, master's certificates and diaries written at sea.

Future Collecting

Items connected to Aberdonians and Aberdeen vessels will be added to the collection when available.

9.6 MODEL SHIPS

The collection currently consists of over 150 ship models representing the diversity of Aberdeen shipping

Future Collecting

Financial constraints mean that further collecting to fill gaps in this collection is likely to be limited to gifts (see paragraph 9.1). This will allow further acquisition in areas such as North Sea oil but it is unlikely that historical models of an appropriate quality can be obtained in this way.

The Jho Sho Maru is likely to be the last model commissioned for some time.

9.7 NORTH SEA OIL & GAS INDUSTRY

The collection includes documents relating to the industry, hardware, photographs, models and large engineering models of oil platforms.

Future Collecting

Aberdeen is in the unique position of being able to acquire objects, documents and photographs on the offshore industry which can be classed as being of National or even International importance. The commitment to build this contemporary material into a large and coherent collection must be continued through an active collecting policy in this field (see paragraph 9.1). Although it is recognised that further large scale acquisitions are unfeasible, efforts must be made to document the industry as thoroughly as possible. This includes looking at a range of issues, such as transport and supply to platforms, life offshore and the environmental impact of the oil industry.

9.8 OCEANOGRAPHY

There is a small but nationally important collection of oceanographic instruments and related items currently on loan from the Marine Laboratory.

Future Collecting

Passive collecting will continue in this area, with most acquisitions likely to be on a small scale, such as current markers and drift bottles.

9.9 PAINTINGS

The collection of ships portraits is very strong with examples ranging from the oil painting of a Scottish warship of the 1660s through to a watercolour of the offshore oil supply vessel 'Tender Trigger'. Recent acquisitions include a number of paintings previously on loan, including the Scottish Warship, purchased from The Aberdeen Shipmasters Society. The purchase of a collection of work by George Mackie showing

Aberdeen harbour's transition from fishing to oil traffic has also significantly enriched the collection.

Future Collecting

Every work has to be considered in relation to the present collection, but portraits of Aberdeen ships must receive serious consideration (see paragraph 9.1).

9.10 PHOTOGRAPHS

The photographic collection consists of more than a thousand images, both historical and contemporary. The main area of interest such as fishing and the oil industry are covered but topics such as fish processing and harbour operations are also well represented.

Future Collecting

Photographs showing Aberdeen and Aberdeen shipping will be collected when available.

A policy of documenting current maritime activity in the harbour through photography will also be pursued. Photography will continue to be one of the major elements in collecting related to the North Sea oil and gas industry.

9.11 SHIPBUILDING

A significant part of this collection is formed by the Hall Russell half models, drawings, specification books and photographs on loan from A & P (Holdings) Ltd. It is anticipated that this important material will be gifted to the museum by A & P. 19th Century shipbuilding is represented by items relating to the clipper ships, including a large collection of photographs, papers and objects from the Duthie family. There is also a small collection of shipyard tools and drawing instruments.

Future Collecting

Additional material will be collected when possible although opportunities to acquire large pieces of machinery are unlikely since there are no remaining Aberdeen shipyards. Aberdeen built vessels may be available as possible exhibits. However, at the present time, there is no space permanently available in the harbour and a floating exhibit is not a possibility.

9.12 WHALING

This small collection includes a number of fine items including ship models, harpoons and scrimshaw.

Future Collecting

Further items will be acquired when possible although reference will be made to the collecting policies of Aberdeenshire Heritage and Dundee City Museums to avoid possible conflicts of interest.

9.13 HANDLING COLLECTION

The Handling Collection, which is used extensively in work with Primary Schools, is comprehensive. It includes two harpoons, a merlan basket, model of the fishing vessel 'David Wood', a survival suit, cork lifebelt, Norwegian foghorn, etc, all the museum's main subject areas being represented.

Some of the objects are in fact handled very little (e.g. the 'David Wood') but are used for illustrations / talking points. Many items are not catalogued, as they are deemed to give best value to the handling collection only. Occasionally this collection is used outwith the museum, for outreach projects. It is continually growing, mainly through donations.

DISPOSAL POLICY

1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 One of the basic functions of museums is preservation. When an item is acquired by a museum it is generally considered to be inalienable having been accepted in trust for posterity. Under the terms of the Museums Association's Code of Practice for Museum Authorities [adopted by the Arts and Recreation Committee, 16 November 1991 1566.3] there is a strong presumption against the disposal of items from museum collections, other than in very special circumstances. This policy statement covers the circumstances in which disposals may take place and the procedures to be followed.

2.0 GENERAL PRINCIPLE

- 2.1 The City Council hereby confirms its acceptance of the principle that the Collections of the Museums are held in trust for future generations. Only under exceptional circumstances will the disposal of any specimen from the Collections be permissible.

3.0 REASONS FOR DISPOSAL

- 3.1 To remove from the Collections any specimen which is too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any further use for the purposes of the Museums.
- 3.2 To improve the quality of the Collections by the disposal of duplicate or unprovenanced material of low intrinsic importance.
- 3.3 To transfer to the ownership of another registered museum any Museum Specimen which, by reasons of changes in public demand, social or educational need, administrative responsibility, development priorities, or the establishment of a new

registered museum, the Director advises the City Council would be more appropriately placed elsewhere.

- 3.4 The sale of Museum Specimens with the sole or primary intention of raising funds is not permissible.

4.0 AUTHORITY FOR DISPOSAL

- 4.1 No Museum Specimen may be disposed of without the specific authority of the City Council. Such a decision must be the responsibility of the City Council, acting on the advice of the Director and not of the Director or any person acting alone.

- 4.2 If the disposal of a quantity of similar material is proposed, the City Council may, however, give the Director delegated authority to act in the specific, once a general principle has been approved.

- 4.3 Where recommendations concerning the disposal of Museum Specimens are to be made, it is understood that there will need to be certain preliminary investigations before a report can usefully be brought before the City Council. This may include such matters as obtaining valuations, seeking the views of donors, and contacts with other registered museums who may be interested in accepting transfers. Within the terms of this policy, it is understood that the Director, has authority to act in this way, without prejudice to the City Council's eventual decision.

5.0 DISPOSAL PROCEDURE

- 5.1 Where a Museum Specimen is no longer required by the Museums, and approval has been given by the City Council to its disposal, it shall be offered first to other registered museums, wherever possible as a gift, but otherwise by loan, exchange or sale.

- 5.2 Where it is intended that a specimen should be sold, an independent valuation should be sought: the Scottish Museums Council will normally advise on obtaining this. The City Council will accept this as the maximum price for the sale of a Museum Specimen to a registered museum, for a period of six months. It will, however, be open to the City Council to authorise a sale to a registered museum at a reduced or nominal price in order to keep an item in public ownership. If sale to an individual, or an organisation other than a museum, does become necessary, the specimen would then normally be offered at a price no less than that valuation.
- 5.3 Where it is the intention to dispose of an item which was acquired by purchase, the Director will take all reasonable steps to discover whether the original purchase was assisted by a grant from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, the National Fund for Acquisitions, the National Art Collections Fund or any other identifiable funding source. Where it is known or discovered that such a grant was made, the body concerned or its successors will be notified of the Museums' intentions so that any relevant conditions attached to the original grant may be fulfilled, such as that the value of the grant or a proportion of any money raised by sale, should be surrendered.
- 5.4 In the first instance, the Director shall seek to identify a specific registered museum with whom an arrangement acceptable to both parties can be made. If this proves impossible, the intended disposal shall be made known to the museum community at large. This will be by means of an announcement placed in the monthly publication of the Museums Association.
- 5.5 The announcement must indicate the nature and number of the Museum Specimens involved, and the basis on which a transfer would be made. A period of at least two months must be allowed between the appearance of the announcement and the implementation of any decision.
- 5.6 If as a result of such an announcement, more than one museum responds, care must be taken to avoid a situation where museums are competing with each other in ignorance.

In such cases, and particularly if the transfer is to be by sale, it will usually be appropriate for the parties concerned to be informed of each other's interest, and time allowed for open discussion before a transfer is finalised. At the request of any party, the Scottish Museums Council will nominate an independent arbitrator.

5.7 If after two months no registered museum has declared an interest in acquiring the Museum Specimen on the basis offered by the City Council, it may then be offered for sale to other interested organisations, to private individuals, or by auction. This may also be done if a registered museum which has previously expressed an intention to purchase is unable to complete such a purchase within a reasonable period, normally six months.

5.8 Where a Museum Specimen is to be disposed of by gift, after six months no registered museum can be found which is willing to accept responsibility for the item, it may be given to any appropriate organisation or individual willing to receive it. In appropriate circumstances, the Director may recommend the return of a specimen to its original donor.

5.9 If the disposal of a Museum Specimen by all other means has proved to be impossible and disposal is regarded as absolutely essential, in exceptional cases the Director may seek from the City Council the authority to instruct its destruction.

6.0 DISPOSAL BY DESTRUCTION

6.1 The destruction of a Museum Specimen will only be acceptable if its retention in the Collections would not be appropriate and no alternative public or private home can be found for it. Museum Specimens which have become in some way seriously damaged, or have deteriorated beyond the point of further usefulness for the Collections, may also from time to time need to be formally de-accessioned. In such circumstances, the Director may seek from the City Council the authority to instruct immediate destruction of an item. This must be carried out in a discreet, confidential and permanent fashion.

Any remains should be deposited at a recognised rubbish dump, or otherwise as required by the appropriate legal authority.

7.0 PROCEDURE FOLLOWING DISPOSAL

- 7.1 Full records will be kept of all disposals from the Museums. Where Museum Specimens have been disposed of, this shall be recorded in the appropriate register.
- 7.2 Where a Museum Specimen is transferred to another registered museum, all the associated documentation must accompany the item or follow within a period of one month. Where appropriate, this will include any photographic records. The Museums will retain, on file, copies of key sections of the documentation, for future reference.
- 7.3 Any money received by the City Council as the result of the sale of a Museum Specimen will normally be placed in the Purchase Fund and used for the acquisition of further specimens. The prior approval of the Museums and Galleries Commission will be sought on any occasion when an alternative use, such as improvements to the care of collections is proposed.

APPENDIX - DEFINITIONS

1. The "Art Gallery and Museums" is defined as the premises, the staff and collections of original material under the control of the Director. At present they include the Art Gallery, Aberdeen Maritime Museum, Provost Skene's House, Tolbooth Museum, Archaeological Unit and the Reserve Collection. In this policy statement the term "Museums" is used in a functional sense and subsumes the terms "art gallery", "galleries" and otherwise as appropriate.
2. The City Council is ultimately responsible for all matters relating to these Policies. However, the Arts and Recreation Committee of the City Council has delegated powers to deal with all aspects of collection and disposal.
3. "Collections" are defined as items recorded in the accession registers of the Art Gallery and Museums whether as gifts, purchases or loans, together with items not yet entered in the accession registers but in the possession of the Art Gallery and Museums, which have been donated, purchased or lent with the intention that they should become part of the collections.
4. The "Director" is defined as being the senior officer reporting to the Chief Executive and responsible to the City Council for the management of the Art Gallery and Museums according to proper professional standards.