

Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art Collections Management Policy

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VIII. COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY REVIEW

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose of the Policy

The Collections Management Policy of the Leslie-Lohman Museum of Art (hereafter the “Museum”) articulates the professional standards and practices by which the proper management of the collections is ensured. It provides guidelines for the acquisition, disposal, documentation, care, and use of the objects for which the Museum serves as custodian (whether permanently or temporarily), ensuring that these activities are undertaken ethically, lawfully, and in accordance with best practices. The goal of this policy is to ensure that a growing collection fully supports the research, exhibition, and educational programs central to the Museum’s mission.

B. Mission Statement

The Museum’s mission is to provide a platform for artistic exploration through multi-faceted queer perspectives. We embrace the power of the arts to inspire, explore, and foster understanding of the rich diversity of LGBTQ+ experiences. Thus we collect, preserve, exhibit, and interpret works of visual art in any medium that are created by, addressed to, or concerned with the experience of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and other gender-nonconforming individuals and communities (hereafter summarized as LGBTQ+ or “queer”). We foster art of aesthetic quality and historical importance and the artists who create it. We embrace the rich creative history of this community by educating, informing, inspiring, entertaining, and challenging all visitors.

II. SCOPE OF THE COLLECTION

The Museum’s total collection holdings encompass more than 23,000 objects. The vast majority of the works are figurative, though some abstract or semi-abstract works are included if they reference queer issues. Their subject matter ranges widely, from simple figure studies to portraiture, scenes of everyday life, historical or mythological depictions, fantasy and erotic narratives, political themes, agit-prop, and conceptual and performative works. Chronologically, most works date from the late 19th through the 21st century, reflecting the modern queer consciousness that arose in 18th-century Europe, developed slowly through the 19th and early 20th centuries, and reached critical mass, public

visibility, and gradual institutionalization in the second half of the 1900s in westernized societies across the globe.

The collections currently comprise three components: works of art, the Institutional Archive, and the Library Collection.

A. Works of Art

The Museum's holdings of artwork are currently categorized into three areas:

The Permanent Collection consists of those items that have been accessed in perpetuity, based on their distinctive aesthetic, historical, or cultural-political significance;

The Study Collection consists of artworks and archival objects of historical significance. These objects, many of which entered the Museum's holdings through large donations and bequests, are in the process of being evaluated by scholars and specialists; they may be permanently accessioned, deaccessioned, or remain in the study collection.

The "Catalogued Collection" consists of objects in the Museum's holdings that have not been assigned to either of the above categories, and which require further research and evaluation before being formally accessioned, deaccessioned, or moved to the Study Collection.

B. Institutional Archives

The Museum currently holds an unprocessed archive of records of all Leslie-Lohman exhibitions and institutional history, as well as primary sources on artists dating back to the mid-20th century, largely those represented in the collection. In large part, this archive comprises the George Dudley Archive (begun in 1992). Donation of any archival materials serving these goals may be accepted by library or curatorial staff members. The Museum will make a commitment to making these archives searchable and accessible to the public, either through the Museum itself or by donation to another institution or archive.

C. Library Collection

The library currently holds over three thousand books, many rare or unique, and over 1,400 catalogues, pamphlets, serial publications, and ephemera, catalogued according to the Dewey Decimal System. The library's mission is to provide a unique and comprehensive research resource on LGBTQ+ art for the use of Museum staff, visiting scholars and artists, and other outside researchers. The collection includes materials covering all historical and geographical categories.

Any item may be included in the library's holdings, without deliberation or vote by the Collections Committee, that fits the Museum's mission and that covers, in whole or in part, some aspect of queer visual creativity or its aesthetic and social context.

III. AUTHORITY AND GOVERNANCE

A. Organizational Structure

The professional staff of the Museum consists of the Director and such additional staff as the Director agrees is necessary and proper for the Museum to accomplish its goals. The Museum's curatorial staff currently includes a Chief Curator, an Assistant Curator, and a Curatorial Assistant.

The Director and Chief Curator are responsible for the exhibition program and for management, care and development of the Collection in tandem with the Board of Trustees and the Collections Committee and in accordance with the policies set forth in this document. The Director and Chief Curator supervise all Museum personnel who work with the Collection, and serve as the liaison between the Collections Committee of the Board and the staff.

B. The Collections Committee

The Collections Committee of the Board is appointed annually, and comprises a minimum of three members of the Board, plus the Director and Chief Curator. Up to three external members, including artists and other cultural producers, may be appointed to the committee. The Committee has the authority to approve the purchase of works of art, and to apply to the purchase of works of art any funds restricted for such purposes. The Committee has the authority to assign objects to the Permanent Collection or the Study Collection.

IV. ACQUISITIONS

A. Goals and principles

The Museum Director and Chief Curator, along with the Collections Committee, actively consider objects for accession, whether by purchase or donation, that support the Museum's mission and are of artistic merit. All works should be in, or capable of being returned to, an acceptable state of preservation, unless the deteriorated physical condition is inherent to the meaning of the work. The Museum must be able to display, store, and care for the proposed acquisition according to accepted museum practices.

The Museum is committed to the principle that all collecting be done according to the highest standards of ethical and professional practice.

The following requirements apply to both gifts and purchases: adequate care can be provided; the condition of the object is acceptable; copyright status is ascertained and acceptable; due diligence is shown in establishing provenance; and clear title is established (the object(s) is not stolen, illegally imported, or removed from country of origin without appropriate approval, illegally removed from an historic or archaeological site, or produced from an endangered species as defined by applicable state and federal laws).

B. Purchase Procedures

Recommendations to the Collections Committee for purchase of artwork should be accompanied by a report, including a description of the work, its condition, and justification for acceptance, including its importance to the Museum's collection. Specific storage needs or conservation conditions should be included, if relevant.

The Collections Committee may decline proposed purchases for various reasons, including but not limited to:

- The fairness of the purchase price relative to the importance of the object to the collection.
- The possibility that a comparable object might be obtained by gift or bequest.
- The availability of funds to cover the cost of purchase, transportation, documentation, conservation, and storage of the object.

A vote by the majority of the Collections Committee is required to approve purchases.

C. Procedures for Accepting Gifts or Bequests

Donations of objects are the primary source for the collection. Recommendations to the Collections Committee for accepting donations of artwork should be accompanied by a report, including a description of the work, its condition, and justification for acceptance, including its importance to the Museum's collection. Recommendations can be made by Museum staff or by members of the Committee. Specific storage needs or conservation conditions should be included, if relevant.

If donations are time-sensitive (ie, proposed in the fourth quarter of the fiscal year) they can be accepted by agreement of two out of the following three persons: the Director, the Chief Curator, or the Committee Chair. Any donor conditions must be approved by the Collections Committee.

The Museum requires donors to transfer all rights of reproduction unless the donor does not own such rights or the gift is made by a living artist of the artist's own work. In such cases, the Museum will seek a nonexclusive right of reproduction from the copyright owner.

The Director, Chief Curator, or Collections Committee may recommend declining gifts for various reasons, including but not limited to:

- The object does not support the Museum's mission.
- The object is of low quality aesthetically.
- The museum does not have the storage space to safely care for the object.
- The object is damaged and the conservation needs are prohibitively expensive.
- The donor has placed rigid restrictions on the gift, which are deemed unacceptable by museum staff.
- There is a very similar object or duplicate already in the collection.
- The object is a forgery.
- The provenance of the object is questionable, or the object was not legally obtained, exported, or imported.

A vote by the majority of the Collections Committee is required to approve donations and bequests.

D. Legal Restrictions to Accession

Objects will be accessioned only when the Museum has determined to the best of its ability that they have been collected, exported, and imported in full compliance with the current laws and regulations of the country or countries of origin, of the federal government of the United States, and of the individual states within the United States. The Museum will in all cases abide by the Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property adopted by UNESCO in 1970 and by the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA).

The Museum must comply with all applicable U.S. law, including treaties and international conventions of which the U.S. is a party, governing ownership and title, import and other issues critical to acquisitions decisions. Beyond the requirements of U.S. law, the Museum should not acquire any object that, to the knowledge of the Museum, has been illegally exported from its country of modern discovery or the country where it was last legally owned.

In addition, AAM recommends that museums require documentation that the object was out of its probable country of modern discovery by November 17, 1970, the date on which the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export, and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property was signed. For objects exported from their country of modern discovery after November 17, 1970, it is recommended that museums require documentation that the object has been or will be legally exported from its country of modern discovery, and legally imported into the United States.

AAM-specified objects of Nazi-era provenance will be acquired only when the Museum has taken all reasonable steps to determine provenance and determine that they are not illegally confiscated objects. The Museum will participate in the Nazi-Era Provenance Internet Portal.

Should evidence be presented to the Museum that an object in its possession was acquired illegally, subsequent to the date on which this policy was approved, the Museum staff and the Collections Committee will conduct an investigation into the circumstances. If justified by the results of the investigation, the Museum will return the object to its rightful owner, to the extent that it is legally possible and practical to do so.

V. DEACCESSIONING AND REMOVAL

A. General Principles

The Museum recognizes its obligation as steward of the collections and a preserver of queer art and history for present and future generations. With more than 23,000 objects in its current holdings, the Museum also recognizes that plans and procedures for responsible deaccessioning are an essential part of collection maintenance. Decisions to deaccession objects (from the permanent collection) or remove objects (from the Study or Catalogued Collection) are made in the interest of strengthening the collections and are made with the best interests of the Museum and the publics it serves.

Before any object is deaccessioned or removed from the collection, reasonable efforts will be made to ascertain that the Museum has clear and legal title and is free of donor restrictions. Where legal restrictions exist as to use or disposition of the object, the Museum will observe these conditions. If there are any questions as to intent or force of restrictions, the Museum will seek legal advice. The object must have been in the collection for the length of time required by tax codes for the donor's benefit, if the donor plans to receive a tax-deduction for the fair market value (currently three years).

B. Conditions and Protocols for Deaccession or Removal

An object may be removed permanently by transfer, exchange, sale, or destruction when one or more of the following applies:

- Object no longer has study, research or exhibition value;
- There are duplicates (e.g., identical or near-identical editions of a print, photography, etc.);
- There are more examples of the type of object in the collection (single artist, period, etc.) than would be exhibited or reasonably used for comparative study purposes;
- Object is deemed to be of inferior quality, readily available on the market;
- Condition of object is beyond repair and cannot be safely stored in such condition;

-Authenticity, attribution, or genuineness of object has changed (e.g., when an object is identified as a known forgery or fake);

-To comply with the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) or the AAM Guidelines Concerning the Unlawful Appropriation of Objects During the Nazi Era; or

-Object material is potentially hazardous to human health or to other objects.

Recommendations of objects for deaccession or removal from the Museum's holdings may be made by the Director, Chief Curator, or other members of curatorial staff who work directly with the collections, or a member of the Committee. Barring restrictions, the proposal to deaccession or remove shall be presented to the Collections Committee for its recommendations. Committee members will read or hear presentations on proposed deaccessions and will recommend deaccession or retention by majority vote. The recommendation on deaccession or removal from the Collections Committee will be presented to the Board, which will vote on the recommendation. Recommendations from the Committee will require a majority vote by the Board.

The Director and Collections Committee have a public accountability for their decision to deaccess or remove objects and the method by which they choose to dispose of an object. Adequate description and documentation of those objects will be kept in Museum files.

Permanent removal of objects from the collections will be undertaken in a legal and ethical manner. The manner of removal chosen will represent the best interests of the Museum, the scholarly and cultural communities they represent, and the public trust. Acceptable removal methods include transfer or exchange with another individual or institution, sale, or destruction.

Objects with market value may be sent to public auction, or sold privately. Objects slated for destruction may be offered back to the donor, if applicable.

Funds received from deaccessioned or removed objects must be used to fund the accession of other artworks or to support direct care of the collections, following the most up-to-date AAM/AAMD and FASB guidelines. According to these guidelines, an investment in collections care should enhance the life, usefulness, cultural relevance, or quality of an object, and is part of adequate and responsible collections planning. At LLM, direct care may include, but is not limited to, costs for: storage, conservation, salaries (or portions of salaries) of staff members directly caring for collections, scholarly research on and assessment of objects, and costs related to digitization of collections.

C. Ethical Considerations

Collections Committee members should not act in their personal interest regarding Museum decisions, and should act solely in the best interests of the Museum.

At all times the original donor's wishes will be considered, and where appropriate, new acquisitions obtained through the sale or trade of the original donated item, will be credited to the donor, as in "Gift of... by Exchange."

VI. CARE OF THE COLLECTIONS

A. Staff Responsibilities

Responsibility for the care and control of the collections ultimately rests with the Director, who delegates overall management of the collections to the Chief Curator, who may also delegate responsibility for the physical care of the collections to the Registrar, Collections Manager, or other members of curatorial staff. Physical care of the collections will be carried out in accordance with best practices.

B. Physical Care

The Museum is committed to the care and preservation of its collections and houses them in a clean, climate-controlled environment that is protected by institutionally appropriate security and fire-detection/suppression systems. The collection is stored and displayed according to current professional practices. Only staff and contractors trained in the care and preservation of objects may examine, handle, and transport works of art.

The Chief Curator/Collections Manager will direct staff and contract conservators to conduct conservation surveys, complete condition reports, identify high-priority conservation needs, and conserve works of art according to the highest professional standards.

Objects in the collection are covered by a standard all-risk fine arts policy.

C. Documentation

Ongoing movement and location of collections objects are tracked via the collections management database (presently, PastPerfect). Each object (whether an accessioned object, an object in custody, or a loan) is recorded with a unique number and record. The database allows information about objects, donors, artists, loan transactions as well as exhibitions to be accumulated, organized, and disseminated through recording and reporting mechanisms.

VII. ACCESS TO THE COLLECTIONS

A. General Access

The Museum is committed to making its collections as accessible as possible, while preserving the safety and integrity of the objects in its custody and care. Digital access to the collections is important in this regard, and the Museum is committed to making its collections available virtually.

Collection objects may be made available to curators and researchers by means of a scheduled visit to the Museum or an art storage area, but only when in the company of a staff member. Physical handling of collections objects by non-staff members is typically not allowed, except by trained conservators and art handlers.

B. Outgoing Loans

The Museum actively lends work from its collections in furtherance of its mission to serve national and international audiences and advance scholarly knowledge of queer art and cultural history.

Objects requested for loan must be in good physical condition, and judged able to withstand the ordinary strains of packing, transportation, handling, and exhibition. Borrowing institutions must follow professional practices and have a facility that meets the standards established by the American Alliance of Museums (AAM). Generally, loan requests must be received at least six (6) months in advance of an exhibition being held in the United States or ten (10) months in advance of an exhibition being held outside the United States. Exceptions may be possible with the approval of the Director.

The Museum will outline any special loan conditions in advance of the loan. Such conditions will pertain to handling and display requirements, and may include a requirement for a Museum courier for transit and installation.

The Director has the final authority to approve or decline a loan.

C. Loan Fees

The Museum reserves the right to charge a loan fee of equal amount to a museum or other institution that typically will charge a loan fee when lending to the Museum. The borrowing institution shall bear all actual costs related to the loan, including packing, crating, transit, insurance, matting, framing, mount making, courier expenses, and other real costs that the Museum incurs in order to make requested loan objects available to borrowers.

VIII. COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT POLICY REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed by the Collections Committee every five years. It is, however, a living document and can be revised at any time by approval of the Collections Committee.