

Arts Council Collection Care & Conservation Policy & Conservation Plan

Name of museum: Arts Council Collection

Name of governing body: Arts Council England

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body: May 2017

Policy Review Procedure

The Collections Development Policy will be published and reviewed at least once every five years.

Date on which this policy is due for review: May 2019

Care and Conservation Policy

1 Introduction

This Policy sets out the principles governing the care conservation of objects held by the Arts Council Collection. It should be viewed in conjunction with the Care and Conservation Plans which detail how the statements in this policy will be delivered.

The policy is one element of the Arts Council Collection's wider collections management framework.

It should be read in conjunction with the documents contained in the Arts Council Collection Collections Management Policy Framework, which includes the Collections Development Policy, Collections Access Policy, Loan Policy and Collections Information Policy.

Mission Statement

The Arts Council Collection is the national loan collection of modern and contemporary British art. Founded in 1946, the Collection reaches the broadest possible audience through long loans to public institutions, exhibition loans, touring exhibitions, and digital and print publications. The Collection supports artists in the UK through the purchase and display of their work, and safeguards it for future generations using the highest possible standards of collections care.

Description of Collections

The Arts Council Collection is one of the largest loan collections of modern contemporary British art. There are now almost 8,000 works in the Collection, which is owned by Arts Council England and administered by the Southbank Centre in London. The collection operates as a 'museum without walls' and is the most widely circulated of all of Britain's national collections. Works are varied and can be viewed in exhibitions in museums and galleries across the UK and abroad and include paintings, sculpture, original works on paper, prints, photographs, film and video, and installation works

The Arts Council Collection lends to public buildings across the UK, including schools, universities, hospitals and charitable associations.

Due to the varied nature of the Collection and its range of media, the

Collection presents certain care and conservation challenges.

2 Guiding Principles

2.1 Caring for collections is a fundamental duty of all museums. This policy covers a combination of preventive and remedial conservation measures, designed to ensure long-term preservation.

2.2 Preventive conservation covers the measures necessary to slow down or minimise deterioration of museum objects, as well as specimens and structures.

2.3 Remedial conservation involves a treatment to an object or specimen to bring it up to a more acceptable condition or state in order to stabilise it or enhance some aspects of its cultural or scientific value.

2.4 The Arts Council Collection will take the best possible care of artists' work within the resources available.

3 Ethics, Legislation and Standards

3.1 The Arts Council Collection is guided in its care and conservation work by the following legal, ethical and standards framework:

- Museums Association Code of Ethics 2015.
- Health and Safety at Work etc. Act 1974.
- Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations 2002.
- Fire Precautions Act 1971.
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999.
- Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended).

3.2 Benchmarks in Collections Care will be used as the basis for maintaining and improving standards of collections care for all Arts Council Collection collections.

4 Approach: Preventive Conservation

The Arts Council Collection will use Benchmarks in Collections Care to enable it to work towards best practice in the care of collections.

The Arts Council Collection will:

- 4.1 Ensure that all staff and volunteers carrying out preventive conservation tasks have appropriate skills and training.
- 4.2 Ensure that all works loaned are condition checked at the start and conclusion of a loan.
- 4.3 Ensure that loan agreements include conditions for lenders to meet best practice for environmental monitoring and control.
- 4.4 Regularly monitor the environment in which artefacts are located for temperature, relative humidity, light levels and pest infestation.
- 4.5 Maintain and analyse a record of environmental conditions.
- 4.6 Carry out regular audits and condition survey work to monitor objects and determine the best course of action for their long-term care and conservation.
- 4.7 Establish and maintain a housekeeping programme for collections.
- 4.8 Ensure that artworks are cleaned only by qualified curatorial staff, approved freelance technicians and in-house technicians.
- 4.9 Assess risk and implement measures to ensure the security of collections.
- 4.10 Ensure, where possible, that the fabric of the buildings housing collections is structurally sound and regularly maintained for both the long-term conservation of the building itself and also the collections they house, in line with their own conservation management plans.
- 4.11 Ensure that Arts Council Collection's visitors and researchers are provided with information so that they can assist in maintaining good collections care.

5 Approach: Remedial Conservation

In cases where interventive conservation treatment is required, the Arts Council Collection will:

- 5.1 Ensure that all staff and volunteers carrying out any treatment have appropriate skills and training.
- 5.2 If required, consult with the artist in question in advance of treatment.
- 5.3 Ensure that conservation expertise, if sourced, is appropriate to the artwork and the medium, taking account of the artist's preferences.
- 5.4 Where possible, the Arts Council Collection will source services from conservators included on the Conservation Register operated by the Institute of Conservation (ICON). In certain circumstances, the needs of the artworks or the preference of the artist will require additional specialist input; work will be carried out by accredited conservators or those with equivalent qualifications.
- 5.5 Seek to recharge the costs of conservation if it takes place during a loan period.
- 5.6 Fully record the process and outcome of conservation work carried out on objects and ensure the information is linked to the object's documentation record on the Vernon collections management system.
- 5.7 Seek to create links with other institutions to share information relating to conservation.

Conservation Procedure and Plan

The Arts Council Collection is committed to a programme of responsive and background conservation. Like most collections, the Arts Council Collection has a conservation backlog which is addressed in this document.

Initial Assessment

When works are requested for loan, a member of the technical team will make an initial assessment and make recommendations should conservation work be required to allow the work to be considered for loan. This assessment will happen prior to the Loans Committee meeting. Any issues relating to works stored at Longside are then raised with the Senior Curator and issues relating to works at Winchester House are then raised with the Collection Curator.

On an ad hoc basis, members of the technical or curatorial team may conduct an initial assessment of a work. All issues should be raised with either the Senior Curator or Collection Curator.

The Arts Council Collection may ask an artist to make an assessment of their work to inform conservation. Where requests are made, the Arts Council Collection will cover the artist's expenses and pay a day rate.

Appointing Conservators

The Arts Council Collection works with ICON registered freelance conservators or those who have excellent references from trusted galleries or studios. The Senior Curator or Collection Curator will oversee all conservation undertaken on behalf of the Arts Council Collection. Conservators will be asked to provide a quote and summary of works, which will be signed off by either the Senior Curator or Collection Curator, before conservation work can begin.

All conservators must meet the Southbank Centre freelancer guidelines.

Condition Checking

All Arts Council Collection works will be checked at the following times:

- Before leaving the Arts Council Collection store: Where possible works will be checked within a maximum of 72 hours of collection by a member of the Arts Council Collection team or an appointed conservator. For larger consignments condition checking may be carried out earlier.
- On arrival at a borrowing venue: Works will be checked by the borrower or by an appointed Arts Council Collection courier. Where an Arts Council Collection courier is present, works will be counter-signed by both a member of the Arts Council Collection team and a representative of the borrowing venue.
- Before leaving a borrowing venue: As on arrival.
- On arrival at an Arts Council Collection store: Where possible, work will be checked within 72 hours of arrival at the Arts Council Collection store by a member of the Arts Council Collection team or appointed conservator.

In the case of long loans, borrowers are asked to check works regularly and complete an Arts Council Collection assessment form each year, including photographs of the work(s) in situ. Condition checking guidance is offered to all long loan venues.

Preventative Conservation

Arts Council Collection technicians undertake preventative conservation as part of their daily routine. These measures include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring works are stored in a controlled environment with limited fluctuations in light, humidity and temperature.
- Adding or replacing glazing.
- Pest management.
- Basis object cleaning and dusting.
- Following object handling guidelines.
- Ensuring works are returned to their home location or are repacked as soon as possible.
- Storing unframed works in acid-free tissue or polyester sleeves .
- Ensuring works are stored in non-toxic materials.
- Enacting security procedures to protect works from theft or vandalism.
- Protecting works from accidental damage from drinks, food, pen ink or other contaminants.

The Arts Council Collection has a programme of ongoing conservation training led by a team of conservators.

Storage

Arts Council Collection works are stored in a number of ways bespoke to the needs of the work. They include but are not limited to:

- T-frames.
- Soft wrapping using poly sheeting and blue 'tulip' corners.
- Acid-free tissue.
- Polyester sleeves.
- Crates, predominantly lined with Plastazote and with a layer of soft wrapping.
- Utz boxes.
- Conservation-standard cardboard boxes.

Storage conditions will be reviewed as part of the five-yearly audit with the aim of improving those conditions.

As the Collection continues to grow each year, the Arts Council Collection requires a long-term storage plan to be signed off by January 2019.

Handling

Arts Council Collection works will only be handled by members of the team who have undergone in-house handling training. The below procedure is adhered to before any objects are handled.

Before handling an object, you must ensure that:

- You know the weight of an object either by asking a member of the team or doing a test lift.
- You have ascertained whether the object has weak points, which must not be used to lift the work.
- You are wearing clean gloves if appropriate.
- The path to where you want to take the object is clear of debris and large enough to fit through when carrying the object.
- The area you wish to take the object to is suitably prepared (i.e. do you need to have blocks in place?)
- If lifting from a low level is required, you do not put strain on your back but lift from your knees.

Permanent Installations

As reflected in the Acquisitions Policy, it is generally not the Arts Council Collection's policy to acquire works which cannot tour. We do have several works which are long-term installations, including *Seizure* by Roger Hiorns and *Arena* by John Maine. We conduct regular checks of these works and respond to any issues using the above procedure for procuring conservation.

Audit

The Arts Council Collection aims to undergo a full collection audit in Winter 2017 and Spring 2018. The aims of the audit are:

- To check and update locations of works.
- To conduct a preliminary condition check.
- To undertake basic conservation and assign a traffic-light label to inform the conservation strategy.
- To make basic storage improvements and create a list of long-term storage improvements.

The audit will prompt further development of a plan to deal with the Arts Council Collection's conservation backlog.