Art Collection Policy

Section 1 - Purpose

(1) This Policy sets out the principles by which the University acquires artworks and manages its art collection.

(2) It documents the requirements for preservation, conservation, and display; the management of inward and outward loans; and describes the principles and practices guiding deaccessioning and disposal of works.

Background

(3) The Macquarie University Art Collection is one of the foremost university art collections in Australia and holds works of state, national, and international significance. Established in 1967, the guiding principle was to build a collection that would 'contribute to the life and the environment of the University' and provide 'an emphasis on recent Australian painting'.

(4) The Art Collection attests to the ongoing importance of art to research, learning, and education. The Collection is developed and managed to support the University's core commitment to teaching, learning and research, and to reflect its mission as a University of service and engagement.

(5) The Art Collection's purpose is to foster cultural exchange, to inspire scholarly enquiry, and to support creative and artistic activities. Through displaying, interpreting, collecting, and preserving artworks of aesthetic and historical value, the Art Collection encourages the generation of new knowledge and enriches the University's community of students, staff, partners, and visitors.

Scope

(6) This Policy applies to all works of art of any medium or format included in the University Art Collection.

(7) This Policy applies to all Macquarie University staff and students.

(8) This Policy does not apply to objects included in other Macquarie University collections, such as the Macquarie University History Museum and the Macquarie University Library.

Section 2 - Policy

Part A - Key Collecting Areas

(9) Artworks will only be considered for inclusion in the Art Collection if they fall within the following Key Collecting Areas of the University.

Australian Art

(10) The University collects artworks that trace the development and diversity of Australian art from the late 1800s to the present. It takes an inclusive approach to selection in the area of Australian art, but with a primary focus on artworks that will retain aesthetic and legacy value in capturing the nation's developing identity and its place in a

changing world.

Indigenous Australian Art

(11) The University selectively collects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art from the early twentieth century until the present that represents the evolving depth and diversity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artistic practice. Collecting practices must align with the values of the Macquarie University Indigenous Strategy 2026 – 2030, with the artwork supporting the strategic aim to 'engage with and promote an understanding of and respect for Indigenous communities, cultures and histories amongst students and staff'. Indigenous Australian art must be acquired ethically, in accordance with ethical and legal obligations as set out under Part C.

Dharug Art

(12) Reflective of the University standing on Dharug land a core collection of Dharug Art has been developed and the University will continue to build upon that strength. As with any Indigenous art, consideration of cultural sensitivities and appropriate consultation with stakeholders will inform acquisition.

International Art

(13) The University collects international art on a selective basis, where the artwork is of outstanding artistic and aesthetic value.

Medium

(14) The Art Collection acquires works primarily in the mediums of painting, drawing, photography, and prints.

(15) Works will be acquired selectively in the following mediums, with consideration for issues of conservation, preservation, storage, display, and interpretation:

a. sculpture;
b. installation;
c. artists books;
d. time-based media;
e. digital media;
f. glassware;
g. textiles; and
h. ceramics.

Priority Areas including Learning and Research

(16) The Macquarie University Art Collection is distinctive as a collection actively serving the University's core mission of learning, teaching, and research. Artworks will be collected which potentially support student-centred learning, scholarly enquiry, or multidisciplinary research. Academic staff may be consulted on acquisition decisions where appropriate.

(17) The Collection is characterised by its diversity and broad representation of artistic endeavours. It does, however, have specific strengths that represent priority areas for collecting.

Australian Modernism

(18) The Collection was established with an early focus on living Australian artists whose practice evidenced both local and international artistic idioms of the day, resulting in a remarkable collection of Australian modernism.

(19) Current collection development seeks to build upon and respond to the Collection's unique history and depth by:

a. identifying and filling gaps with examples of Australian modernism, especially for the 1960s and 1970s;
b. collecting contemporary Australian and select international art which retraces the lineage of modernist art within the framework of contemporary aesthetic developments; and
c. identifying emerging and mid-career Australian artists and their evolving practices that link with Australian modernism.

Macquarie University History and Place

(20) Works may be acquired for their historical and cultural significance that reflect the University's evolving sense of place and community.

Part B - Acquisitions

Methods of Acquisition

(21) Acquisitions are made to the Art Collection by purchase, donation, bequest, or transfer. All acquisitions belong to the University as an institution and not to any individual, faculty, department, or office. Proposals for the purchase, donation, bequest, gift, commission, or transfer of items to the collection will be assessed by the Senior Curator, Art Gallery with recommendations made to the Art Collection Committee for endorsement and subsequent approval in accordance with the relevant delegations per the Delegations of Authority Policy and Delegations of Authority Register.

Acquisition Criteria

(22) The following criteria must be considered before the acquisition of any artwork:

Table 1: Acquisition Criteria	
a) Relevance	The artwork must relate to the Art Collection's purpose and Key Collecting Areas.
b) Significance	Based on the assessment criteria established by Significance 2.0 works must have artistic/aesthetic significance. Works may also be acquired that have historic, scientific/research or social significance that relates to the research, learning, teaching, and/or community engagement activities of the University.
c) Provenance and Documentation	Consideration will only be given to artworks where the history of the object is known, and associated documentation and support material can be provided.
d) Condition and Completeness	The condition of the object must be taken into consideration when acquiring material. Damaged works or those requiring conservation will not normally be accepted into the Collection.
e) Rarity or Representativeness	Works that are unique or singular may be prioritised, for example an excellent or rare example of an artist's oeuvre or a specific genre.
f) Size	Large works that exceed the Art Gallery's and the University's available storage capacity and/or display space will not usually be considered for acquisition, nor will any artwork that requires specialised housing.
g) Preservation and Conservation	Works requiring highly specialised conditions for preservation, display or storage or ongoing maintenance and conditions beyond standard collection management practices will not normally be acquired.
h) Conditional Acquisitions	As a general principle, the University will not acquire artworks which carry restrictions or conditions. An exception may be made where the work is of outstanding value and the Art Collection Committee has assessed all associated costs and implications of complying, and where required this recommendation is accepted and approved by the appropriate Delegate in accordance with the Delegations of Authority Register.

i) Legal and Ethical Requirements	The University will only accept artworks where the donor / vendor has demonstrable legal title to the object. Artworks will only be acquired where all ethical requirements, including cultural sensitives for the acquisition of Indigenous artworks, have been considered. Legal and Ethical obligations as set out in Part C of this Policy must be satisfied.

Part C - Legal and Ethical Obligations

Applicable Regulations and Guides

(23) All University staff and members of any related boards or committees involved with the development and management of the University Art Collection and Art Gallery will abide by all appropriate legislation, policy, and guidelines regarding collecting practices and procedures.

(24) The University develops and exhibits the collection and selects inward loans in a legal, ethical, responsible, and accountable manner, as described in the Australian Best Practice Guide to Collecting Cultural Material and the International Council of Museums Code of Ethics for Museums . As a publicly funded University endorsed by the Australian Taxation Office as a Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR), all donations received under the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program are also managed according to the collection policies outlined in the Cultural Gifts Program Guide and the University's Donations and Fundraising Policy.

(25) The University Art Collection complies with the Australian Government's Protection of Movable Cultural Heritage Act 1986, the Protection of Cultural Objects on Loan Act 2013 and the Protection of Cultural Objects on Loan Regulation 2014 and recognises that Australia is a signatory to the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property 1970.

Due Diligence

(26) The University is committed to ensuring due diligence before acquiring work for its Art Collection, as set out in the Australian Best Practice Guide to Collecting Cultural Material . Due diligence extends to thoroughly evaluating and acting upon any new information that raises questions about the provenance or authenticity of previously acquired objects.

(27) The University will not:

a. acquire artworks for its collection, whether by purchase, donation, bequest or transfer, unless satisfied that it can acquire valid title to the material in question and understands the history and provenance of that material;
b. acquire artworks unless it is satisfied that the work has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin in violation of that country's law; or
c. acquire any artwork which represents a risk to the University's reputation. This may include consideration of the source of any donations, with particular reference to the University's Funding from the Tobacco Industry Policy and Donations and Fundraising Policy.

Culturally Sensitive Material

(28) The University is committed to respecting cultural sensitivities in the collection, display, and interpretation of works of art and supports best practice protocols, including those documented within the Macquarie University Indigenous Strategy 2026 – 2030, to inform fair, sensitive, and effective consultation in dealing with Indigenous artists and communities.

Part D - Deaccessioning and Disposal

Criteria for Deaccessioning

(29) The practice of careful deaccessioning refines and can improve the quality of a collection. An artwork can be deaccessioned from the University Art Collection if:

a. it no longer falls within the parameters of this Policy;
b. it is damaged or deteriorated beyond repair or restoration;
c. proper storage, conservation, and collection management requirements cannot be met;
d. new information is acquired which leads to a reassessment of the item's significance, historical or artistic and aesthetic value;
e. it no longer aligns with the long-term strategic aims of the University;
f. it has become hazardous or poses a risk to people, property, or other works of art;
g. it is of a type that can be better placed in another public collecting institution;
h. the provenance is undocumented, or it lacks supporting documentation to enable proper identification or to establish its relevance to the Art Collection and adherence to this Policy; or
i. it is identified by appropriate experts / valuers in the field as a forgery, or falsely documented, described or attributed.

(30) If an enquiry is received from an individual, group, organisation or government agency regarding the repatriation of cultural material and objects of significance to an Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander community or Indigenous community in another country, the University will follow established procedures outlined in the Australian Best Practice Guide to Collecting Cultural Material , Section 7: Information Revealed Subsequent to Acquisition.

(31) When deaccessioning any item, the University will balance a range of considerations, including, but not limited to:

a. criteria for deaccessioning as set out under clause 29;
b. the University and University Art Gallery's reputation;
c. the effect on the willingness of current and future benefactors to donate or bequeath material to the University collection;
d. the effect on the University Art Gallery's relationship with any living artist;
e. conditions outlined in policies related to the Australian Government's Cultural Gifts Program Guide;
f. any conditions attached to the gift, bequest or transfer of an artwork; and
g. the University's Capital Asset Management Policy.

Deaccession Principles

(32) The overarching principles which apply to the deaccessioning of any item are:

a. an item will only be deaccessioned if to do so will improve the overall quality of the Art Collection, having regard to considerations as set out under clause 31;
b. deaccessioning decisions will be objective and not based on current trends or personal tastes;
c. an item identified for deaccessioning from the collection must be thoroughly assessed and documented by curatorial staff, with a recommendation from relevant curatorial staff to the Art Collection Committee for subsequent consideration and approval in accordance with relevant authorisations in the Delegations of Authority Register;
d. where practicable the University will not deaccession a work of art by a living artist without first engaging with that artist;
e. where practicable the University will not deaccession a work of art donated or bequeathed to the Art Collection without first engaging with any relevant donor, executor or trustee;

f. current University staff, volunteers, and Art Collection Committee members and their families are prohibited from purchasing or otherwise obtaining a deaccessioned object, as are any other persons external to the University with a conflict of interest;
g. donors are also prohibited from purchasing, or otherwise obtaining, a deaccessioned object for which they have previously claimed a tax deduction (e.g. under the Australian Government Cultural Gifts Program); and
h. any funds received from the sale of deaccessioned objects must be used only for the future acquisition and development of the Art Collection, preferably in the same collecting area.

Disposal Principles

(33) The method of disposal of artworks under this Policy must consider the public interest as well as the interests of the University and the University Art Collection, noting the following principles:

a. other than objects donated under the Australian Government Cultural Gifts Program, donated objects will be returned to the donor or their estate if they can be contacted within a reasonable time period, and if they are in agreement. The Art Collection Committee must be reassured that reasonable effort has been made to contact the donor prior to any planned disposal;
b. the first option for disposal of deaccessioned items that were not donations will be to transfer to an appropriate institution; and
c. if transfer to another institution is not possible, deaccessioned objects may be sold by public auction or tender.

(34) Deaccessioned works of art will only be disposed of by destruction if all other methods of disposal (clause 33) have been considered and found impracticable, and the deaccessioned item is unable to be repaired at a reasonable cost and would be inappropriate to use as an education or interpretative tool.

Part E - Loans, Display, and Access

(35) The University aims to make its collection available to the widest possible audience for education, research, appreciation, and enjoyment. It therefore will lend and borrow material for these purposes. All loans will be carefully managed to protect the long-term value of the Art Collection and the University's reputation.

Inward Loans

(36) The University will manage and negotiate inward loans on terms that are ethical, transparent and avoids any act or omission that may attract legal liability or compromise the University's position and reputation for integrity in public administration.

(37) Inward loans will only be accepted for a specific purpose such as exhibitions or research.

(38) Inward loans will be thoroughly and appropriately documented according to international best practice procedures adopted by the University Art Gallery.

(39) An inward loan agreement form must be signed by the University Librarian and an authorised officer of the lender. Each party will hold a copy of this agreement, which will record the conditions of loan, including transport of the artworks and transit insurance, the conditions of storage, the purpose and period of the loan.

(40) Long-term and permanent inward loans will not be accepted due to the cost of maintenance, unless the loan will be eventually transferred as a gift within a clear and agreed time frame.

Outward Loans

(41) The University will lend items from its Art Collection to recognised public collecting institutions and / or for the purposes of display in public, civic spaces.

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(42) Outward loans will be thoroughly and appropriately documented according to international best practice procedures adopted by the University Art Gallery.

(43) An outward loan agreement form must be signed by the University Librarian and an authorised officer of the borrower. Each party will hold a copy of this agreement, which will record the conditions of loan, including transport of the artworks and transit insurance, the conditions of storage, the purpose and period of the loan.

(44) The borrower must exercise care in the handling, storage, and display of the loan objects and must be prepared to meet the conditions specified in the outward loan agreement.

(45) The borrower will provide a secure display and storage area.

(46) The borrower will be responsible for all costs associated with the loan including insurance, transport, and conservation as required, framing, installation, and de-installation of any borrowed work.

Internal Loans / Display

(47) The University Art Collection enhances the campus and other locations at which the University operates, and places art as an integral part of the learning and workplace environment. Art is displayed in the University Art Gallery and in public and staff spaces. Display of art in staff spaces must be balanced against the University's responsibility to preserve artworks and to provide access to a wide public audience. The following principles therefore apply to internal loans:

a. loans involving the display of art in personal offices, meeting rooms, and other staff or workspaces must be appropriately documented;
b. prior to any internal loan agreement, curatorial staff will undertake a risk assessment of the workspace to consider any potential risks such as furniture, equipment, people movement as well temperature, dust, insects, moisture, and light levels; and
c. works must only be installed and deinstalled by professional art removalists and/or under the auspices of Art Gallery curatorial staff.

Access

(48) The University Art Collection is provided for the benefit of the University and wider community. Select artworks are therefore accessible in the University Art Gallery and in public spaces on campus and at other locations at which the University operates.

(49) Students, staff, and external researchers may examine individual objects for learning, teaching or research purposes by prior arrangement with the Senior Curator, Art Gallery and following instruction in proper handling techniques.

(50) Collection records are also accessible for research purposes by students, staff, and external researchers by appointment with the Senior Curator, Art Gallery.

Section 3 - Procedures

(51) Refer to the Art Collection Management Procedure.

Section 4 - Guidelines

(52) Nil.

Section 5 - Definitions

(53) The following definitions apply for the purpose of this Policy:

a. Accession means the process through which a work of art formally enters and is documented into the collection;
b. Art Collection means works of art in any medium, genre or format which are Macquarie University property and have been formally accessioned. For the purposes of this policy, the terms “work of art”, “artwork” and related terms are used interchangeably to describe all art of other material accessioned into the collection.
c. Acquisition means the process of obtaining valid title to a work of art, through purchase, gift, donation, bequest, or commission;
d. Bequest is defined in the Donations and Fundraising Policy;
e. Commission means the request and authorisation for the creation of an original artwork by Macquarie University;
f. Cultural Gift is defined in the Donations and Fundraising Policy;
g. Deaccession means the process to formally remove a work of art from the collection;
h. Destruction means significant damage rendering a work of art no longer viable, through natural processes, accident or deliberate action;
i. Disposal means the removal of artwork from the collection following deaccessioning by means of sale, gifting, return to donor or artist, or destruction;
j. Due Diligence means the thorough assessment of a work of art to evaluate its authenticity, ownership and provenance;
k. Gift is defined in the Donations and Fundraising Policy;
l. Loan means the act of borrowing a work for temporary inclusion in the Macquarie University Art Collection, or granting an external party the use of artwork from the permanent collection, for example for the purposes of exhibition, with the understanding the work will be returned to the owner at the end of the loan agreement
m. Provenance means the history and ownership of an item from the time of its creation or discovery, and the process by which authenticity and ownership is established.

Acknowledgement

(54) Documentation from the following institutions was reviewed in developing this policy, and is gratefully acknowledged:

a. National Gallery of Australia;
b. Museums and Galleries of NSW; and
c. Art Gallery of NSW.

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