

Cultural Collections Management Policy

For

Botanic Gardens Trust

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Statement of Intent

This policy is intended to be used by the Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust (the Trust) to manage their cultural collection. This Policy builds on the previous Cultural Acquisitions Policy, and introduces additional criteria to allow a more consistent approach to decision making, in regards to cultural acquisitions.

This policy is intended to be used by each of the Trust's four estates and the National Herbarium of New South Wales. It is acknowledged that each of the estates and the National Herbarium of New South Wales (the Herbarium) will use this Policy with a different emphasis. Mount Annan and Mount Tomah intend to use this Policy to actively grow the cultural collection, and to encourage interaction with local communities, cultural organisations and the public. The Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, the Domain and the National Herbarium of New South Wales also intend this document to provide clarity of direction of cultural collections growth, and protocols of ongoing management.



Introduction

This document provides policies and guidelines for the systematic development, management and maintenance of the Trust's cultural collections, which includes those of the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney, the Domain, the National Herbarium of New South Wales, Mount Annan Botanic Garden and Mount Tomah Botanic Garden.

These policies and ensuing guidelines are designed to ensure that the Trust maintains the cultural collections, and make them accessible to both Trust staff and the public. This thereby fulfils its objectives under the *Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust Act (1980)*, section 7, which states that a principle objective of the Gardens is to '...encourage use and enjoyment of Gardens lands by the public by promoting and increasing the educational, historical, cultural and recreational value of those lands'¹.

This document has been divided into twelve sections for each aspect of cultural collections management and care:

1. Documentation
2. Acquisitions
3. Accessioning
4. Loans
5. Access
6. Storage and display
7. Copyright
8. Security
9. De-accessioning
10. Disposal
11. Exhibitions
12. Conservation

¹ *Royal Botanic Gardens and Domain Trust Act (1980)*, section 7



Mission

Each estate and the Herbarium falling under the auspices of the Trust is in a unique position within the history and heritage of New South Wales. Each estate and the Herbarium aims to promote itself, and the Trust as a whole, as an inspirational place to be. The Trust and by association, the cultural art they acquire, can be seen to be fulfilling the overall mission of the Trust, which is 'to inspire the appreciation and conservation of plants'.²

Policy Review

This document should be reviewed within five years, or whenever any associated State legislation changes, in order to reassert the objectives of the Trust in relation to its cultural collections.

Associated relevant documents

The aim of this Collections Management Policy is to address issues relating to the Trust's cultural collections. This document is underpinned by two existing Trust policies:

- Cultural Acquisitions Policy
- Cultural Activities Policy

This document should also be used in conjunction with:

- Royal Botanic Gardens Conservation Management Plan
- Domain Plan of Management
- Mount Annan Botanic Garden Master Plan
- Mount Tomah Botanic Garden Thematic Plan

² Botanic Gardens Trust Cultural Acquisitions Policy, 2006.



The Collections

Cultural collections in botanic gardens and parklands, both historic and contemporary, have for many years, been recognised as playing an important role in establishing the character of the estate. Public art contributes to the heritage and style of the estate, supports and expresses cultural life and community aspirations. It also serves to promote the estate as both a creative and vibrant site.³

The cultural collections of the Trust is primarily composed of, but not limited to, large outdoor sculptures, fountains and interpretative paving and kerbing. It also includes artworks, botanical illustrations, fabric art, historic and artistic photographs and slides, archaeological finds, antique furniture, historic books and general realia. These items are currently distributed across four estates and the Herbarium

It should be noted that the cultural collection does not include the resources held and managed by the Library, unless defined above. The Library has well established procedures for managing their collection and archive, consistent with library best practice.

The collection items have been acquired both through direct purchase and through donations and bequests. In addition, various cultural programs run by the Trust, involving the creation of sculptures from material within the estates, have been displayed as cultural collection items.

³ Ibid.



1 Documentation

Introduction

Documentation underpins every aspect of well managed cultural collections. It is central to the accountability of the collections, its accessibility and use. Documentation involves the recording of information about items in order to identify them, in addition to tracking their movement and use throughout the Trusts' estates and the Herbarium.

Documentation also serves to preserve valuable information about collection items, and gives meaning to them. It can also provide background information to management decisions. Without documentation, the value of the item is decreased.

Policy

The Trust will document its cultural collections to a standard that ensures it can consistently record the nature and location of its cultural collections.

Guidelines

- 1.1 The Trust will know at any given time exactly what items it is legally responsible for, and where each item is located. This includes loaned items as well as items in its permanent collections.
- 1.2 All items accepted into the Trusts' cultural collections, no matter what age or size, will be documented to the degree that they can be uniquely identified, located, tracked, audited and inventoried.

Information recorded during this process should include (see also Section 3 Accessioning):



- Name/title of item
 - Artist
 - Dimensions
 - Current location, or where it will be kept/stored
 - Condition
 - Provenance – where did the item come from?
 - Who donated or created the item
 - Significance – why is this item significant to the Gardens or the Trust's cultural collections? Include anecdotal accounts here.
 - A photograph of the item
- 1.3 Lack of documentation/provenance should not prevent inclusion of items which have intrinsic scientific/social/historical value to the collection. However, the Trust should endeavour to seek out the required information as soon as is practicable.
- 1.4 Documentation will be undertaken on all items pertaining to the identity, provenance, legal title and other related information regarding significance, function, description, and details of condition, usage, history of ownership, de-accessioning and disposal.
- 1.5 All persons responsible for the Trusts' cultural collections will be made aware of the importance of documentation and staff will be trained in all procedures with which they will be directly involved.
- 1.6 The Trust will use accepted and consistent standards, methods and procedures to document the collections. Each estate and the Herbarium that oversees a cultural collection will be responsible for good management of the collection and for maintaining an appropriate record of their items, to the full extent of available resources.
- 1.7 The Trust will record cultural items on manual and/or electronic database systems.
- 1.8 The Trust Library will keep records of all acquisitions on their existing database. (See also Section 2 Acquisitions and Section 9 De-accessioning).



- 1.9 Any change in status of an item, for example, if de-accessioned, loaned or transferred, must be thoroughly documented. The reasons for the new status must also be recorded.
- 1.10 All artworks created by community members using elements found in estates and the Herbarium are to be documented in the same manner as other collection items (see also Section 11 Exhibitions).
- 1.11 An audit of the collection will be undertaken every twelve months in order to reduce the risk of theft, and to monitor the condition of collection items (see Section 8 Security).



2 Acquisitions

Introduction

Acquiring an item is the act of taking legal possession and ownership of an item with a view to developing and enhancing the Trusts' cultural collections.

Policy

The Trust will only acquire items that fulfil its acquisition criteria and the generic requirements of relevance, provenance and practical responsibility. Every cultural acquisition should:

- Be directly relevant to the estate or the Herbarium to which it is offered;
- Not conflict in any way with core Trusts' activities and mission⁴

Guidelines

2.1 The Trust will collect items through:

- **Donations:** where the donor displays clear legal title and where ownership passes to the Trust so that items may be displayed, stored, loaned, treated, restored, photographed, published or disposed of at the discretion of the Trust. Gifts or bequests may be accepted from any source, including staff members. All donations become the property of the Trust and are subject to its policies and procedures.
- **Specific purchase:** where items are specifically purchased for one of the Trust estates or the Herbarium
- **Transfer:** where an item is formally transferred from one estate to another or from another collecting institution

⁴ Botanic Gardens Trust Cultural Acquisitions Policy, 2006



- **Bequests:** where items are left to the Trust or one of its estates or the Herbarium in an estate. The Trust will respect the conditions of proposed bequests, but reserves the right to have the Executive come to a workable solution suitable to both parties.
 - **Legal deposit:** where items are given to a collection as a legislative requirement.
 - **Appropriate finds:** where an item is discovered in a building or on one of the Trust estates or the Herbarium and identified as being significant to the collection
- 2.2 Acquisitions will be selective. Due to space and financial limitations it is not feasible to allow indiscriminate growth of collections. Acquisition proposals will need to address all of the following criteria and be able to be justified against a substantial number of them. They will need approval at an estate or Herbarium level on a case by case arrangement. Proposed acquisitions must:
- Directly relate to the Trusts' core activities. This may include:
 - Botany, horticulture, conservation, education and recreation
 - Specific historical, heritage or other estate links
 - Contribution to recreational enjoyment and/or celebration of an estate
 - Financial returns or commercial relevance⁵
 - Directly relate to an estate or the Herbarium. It should:
 - Be appropriate to the site
 - Take into account the existing cultural items on the relevant estate and the Herbarium and how the new item contributes to the collection as a whole
 - Not impact adversely on the gardens, turf, other physical features, maintenance or activities held in the area
 - In the case of civic acquisitions, be appropriate and significant to the community. In the Royal Botanic Gardens Sydney specifically, there must be a very high level of connection to the history and location of the site⁶

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Ibid.



- Not impose unreasonable burdens on the Trust , in respect to resources required to manage, maintain or store the item
 - Be of a very high standard
 - Enhance or enrich the Trusts ' estates and the Herbarium
 - Be clearly provenanced
 - Be significant to the Trust or the individual collections' focus
 - Not already exist in the collection
 - Be in a stable condition
 - Be a whole set (i.e. not part of a set)
 - Able to be appropriately stored and cared for under conditions that will ensure their availability for teaching, research, and service and that are in keeping with professionally accepted standards.
- 2.3 Conversely, the Trust will not collect, unless reasonable justification exists for doing so, items as follows:
- Conditional donations
 - Long term loans or 'permanent loans'
 - Items with unknown provenance or inadequate documentation
 - Items that cannot be appropriately housed or cared for
 - Duplicate items (items that already exist in the collection)
 - Items in poor condition that cannot be conserved or stabilised
 - Items that are likely to result in major future expenses
 - Items that have been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any state or federal law
- 2.4 All cultural acquisitions must be accepted on the basis that they are not necessarily permanent and in most cases will have a fixed term at the estates.
- 2.5 Items that have been collected, sold or otherwise been transferred in contravention of the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property will not considered for acquisition.
- 2.6 For major acquisitions the Board of Trustees, on advice from the Executive Director and the Cultural Acquisitions Advisory Panel, will make the determination to accept or reject an acquisition, and the terms of acceptance. Major acquisitions are defined as:



- Being in excess of \$250,000 in total value; or
 - Being excessive in size (eg out of proportion with its surrounds); or
 - Potentially having a considerable impact on the Trusts infrastructure and resources, both during installation and in-situ; or
 - Potentially being erected in prime vantage positions⁷.
- 2.7 For other acquisitions, the Gardens Executive, on advice from the Cultural Acquisitions Advisory Panel (where appropriate) will make the determination to accept or reject an acquisition and the terms of acceptance (See Appendix – Acquiring an Item).
- 2.8 For minor works, as stipulated in the Cultural Acquisitions Policy, the relevant Branch Director may make a recommendation to the Executive Director, but where the work raises any of the points in 2.3, it should be referred to the Executive (See Appendix – Acquiring an Item).
- 2.9 For genuinely minor acquisitions which are closely related to the core purpose of the Trust, the Branch Director may make the determination to accept or reject an acquisition and the terms with which it is accepted⁸ (See Appendix – Acquiring an Item).
- 2.10 The Cultural Acquisitions Advisory Panel reserves the right to advise on matters of artistic taste and merit, and will provide comment and advice on context, suitability, risk management and potentially contentious issues.
- 2.11 Donors will be required to make provision for any transportation/installation costs and on-going maintenance or special insurance, unless agreed otherwise. Removal costs should also be provided by the donor.
- 2.12 The Trust will not take responsibility for normal wear and tear or public interference of any object in any location.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.



- 2.13 The Trust Library will keep records of all acquisitions and the relevant estate or Herbarium manager will monitor and notify donors of damage, change of location or de-accession (See also Section 1 Documentation and Section 9 De-accessioning).
- 2.14 The Trust will actively promote its acquisition policy on its website, in conjunction with its Conservation Management Plan and Plans of Management.
- 2.15 The Trust will ensure items within its collections are maintained in an appropriate manner, in order to ensure their long-term survival (see also Section 12 Conservation).



3 Accessioning

Introduction

Accessioning is the act of formally recording or processing a new item into the permanent inventory of the Trusts' cultural collections, and assigning a particular level of care to that item.

Policy

The Trust will accession every item it acquires by assigning it a unique number, recording key information and labelling.

Guidelines

- 3.1 The Trust will accession all items being acquired by:
 - Assigning a unique collection number
 - Undertaking documentary recording including:
 - Title or description
 - Condition and level of completion (to detect deterioration)
 - Where the item came from/was recovered from
 - Who donated it to the collection (or created the item)
 - When it was donated or created
 - Where it will be located, kept or stored
 - Any specific handling/storage/display requirements
 - A photograph
 - General associated information (where available, such as published articles, reviews etc)
- 3.2 Any object in the custody of the Trust that is not covered by a signed gift agreement or a signed loan agreement will be known as an un-accessioned item. Proper operation requires that un-accessioned items be returned to the lawful owner. In the event that the lawful owner cannot be determined or cannot be located after diligent effort, ownership shall be vested in the Gardens.
- 3.3 Each item will be labelled with the collection number using conservation approved materials and techniques.



4 Loans

Introduction

Loans are the temporary physical transfer of items from one institution to another where there is no transfer of ownership. The loan process should be implemented for any collection items which are temporarily being placed, housed or looked after outside their normal physical collection area.

Policy

The Trust will allow the temporary loan of items both into and from its collection, subject to the safety and security of the item being assured and appropriate documentation undertaken.

Guidelines

- 4.1 Items within the Trusts' collections will be available for both internal and external loans.
- 4.2 Inward loans will be at the discretion of the estate or Herbarium manager in consultation with the external lending organisation.
- 4.3 In respect to outward loans, the Trust will retain the right for a member of staff to courier and/or be present when material is used for display. The cost of this will normally be borne by the borrower.
- 4.4 The estate or Herbarium manager in charge of the collection item will be responsible for authorising and monitoring the loan.
- 4.5 All loan requests will be considered against the need to ensure preservation and security of the item, in particular fragile or irreplaceable items. No loans will be made or accepted when an unreasonable risk to the safety or security of the loan material exists.
- 4.6 The Trust reserves the right to refuse a loan request and may recall a loan for any reason.
- 4.7 Each request for a loan from the Trust must be submitted in writing. The Trust will ensure that there are written agreements signed by both parties (the Trust and borrower) in advance of the loan.



- 4.8 Loan requests will be assessed and, if necessary, specific conditions agreed prior to dispatch and noted in writing, especially where analysis or dissection of items or other detailed study is involved.
- 4.9 Any borrowed material will be handled and managed according to the Trusts' professional procedures and standards.



5 Access

Introduction

Access to the collection for public viewing ultimately justifies each item's placement in the Trust. Access may also involve the physical handling either by a member of staff or other interested parties as permitted by the Trust.

Policy

The Trust will maximise the opportunity for visual access to the collections by the public. It will also facilitate physical access to the collections by staff and approved persons under agreed criteria.

Guidelines

- 5.1 Access to, and use of, the collections will be balanced against the conservation, care and security of the items in order to ensure their long-term survival. Any request for access that might jeopardise the long-term future of any items may be refused by the Trust, with full reasons offered.
- 5.2 Any staff member who has physical access to the collections must use appropriate care and handling techniques.
- 5.3 Any staff member who provides physical access to the collections to a non-staff member is responsible for ensuring that the person understands and agrees to use appropriate care and handling techniques.
- 5.4 In regard to outdoor artworks, the Trust will ensure that appropriate signage is placed about the estates advising visitors to the Trust that they are not permitted to touch the artworks.



6 Storage and display

Introduction

The majority of outdoor collection items will spend most of their time on display throughout the Trust. The majority of the remaining collections will spend the most of their time in storage. It is therefore imperative that both display and storage materials and methods are of the highest quality, as incorrect materials and conditions can assist in accelerating deterioration.

Policy

The Trust seeks to provide appropriate conditions at all times for the display and storage of its collections, including appropriate environments and housing materials.

Guidelines

- 6.1 The Trust aims at all times to provide a clean and secure environment for the storage and display of each item in its collections.
- 6.2 The Trust will ensure that collection items are stored in the most appropriate location, taking into account factors including value, size, level of environmental conditions required and the frequency with which an item is likely to be consulted.
- 6.3 Items having the potential to be hazardous to the public, staff, the environment or the rest of the collections are generally not acceptable unless properly handled and stored in accordance with existing safety regulations.
- 6.4 Should an interested party approach an estate with a request to purchase a sculpture displayed on its grounds, and it is not owned by the Trust, the estate or Herbarium manager will inform the artist, who possesses the right to accept or decline the offer of purchase. This is currently the arrangement at Mount Annan (see also Section 11 Exhibitions).
- 6.5 The Trust should establish a register of items on display, to ensure vulnerable items are not over displayed, and that an effective system of rotating items between display and storage is followed.



7 Copyright

Introduction

Copyright is the exclusive right to make copies, license, and otherwise exploit an artistic work, whether printed, audio or video.

Policy

Unless otherwise agreed, the Trust will reserve the right to reproduce images of the item free of copyright.

Guidelines

- 7.1 As a condition of acquisition, the Trust will acquire all copyrights associated with the item, and will be free to reproduce images of the item in any way it sees fit.
- 7.2 If the Trust cannot acquire all copyrights (that is, if copyright is still held by the artist), the relevant estate or Herbarium manager will work with the copyright holder to come to a workable solution suitable to both parties.



8 Security

Introduction

Providing secure environments for collections is imperative. Security measures include; the presence of correct procedures for moving and handling items, and also involves both physical and electronic systems for monitoring and guarding items.

Policy

The Trust undertakes to provide a secure environment for the storage, transportation and display of its collections at all times.

Guidelines

- 8.1 All staff are responsible for maintaining the security of the collection.
- 8.2 Items should be kept in secure conditions at all times, whether in use, in transit or in storage. This may include the use of both physical and electronic measures.
- 8.3 Any loss must be documented and reported to the estate or Herbarium manager. If a loaned item is affected, the estate manager must inform the owner.
- 8.4 If collection items are kept in lockable rooms or cabinets, the issue of keys should be limited to a minimum number of staff.



9 De-accessioning

Introduction

De-accessioning is the permanent removal of an item from the collections following stringent guidelines and detailed procedures. It is the procedural action taken in relation to an item prior to its disposal.

Policy

De-accessioning of items from the Trusts' collections is acceptable, subject to strict adherence to criteria and detailed documentation.

Guidelines

- 9.1 Any item proposed for de-accessioning must first be fully researched to ensure it is not subject to any condition established at the time of acquisition which may affect its disposition, to ensure that the Trust has clear title, to ensure it has no other operational value within the estates, and to ensure that its disposal does not violate any existing laws or regulations.
- 9.2 De-accessioning from the Trusts' collections can then be considered, subject to one or more of the following criteria being fulfilled. The item must be able to:
 - Be extremely deteriorated and of no further use to the Trust
 - Pose a preservation threat to other elements of the collection
 - Be unable to be appropriately cared for or stored (ie, not able to provide a safe, sheltered, secure place to store the item, or not able to undertake maintenance or repairs when necessary)
 - Be redundant or no longer considered significant to the collections
 - Be duplicated within the collections
 - Not comply with the Trusts' Collections Management Policy
 - Have been stolen or lost (evidence must be provided)
 - Have a substantiated request made by the original donor for its return
 - Jeopardise the safety of visitors, volunteers and staff



- 9.3 Financial reasons (either to raise money for any purpose or to reduce expenditure) must not be a principal reason for de-accessioning an item.
- 9.4 The decision and responsibility to de-accession an item must be made by the estate manager or Librarian. The estate or Herbarium manager should seek approval from higher authority (that is, the Board of Trustees, on advice from the Executive Director and the Cultural Acquisitions Advisory Panel) when appropriate, including when
- the item is valued at more than \$250,000
 - the de-accession could potentially have a considerable impact on the Trust, or the Trust's reputation
- 9.5 The item, and the process of de-accessioning and disposal, will be thoroughly and uniformly documented and undertaken in accordance with the highest professional standards and ethics. These records will be maintained by the Trust, so that the reasons for such action are known in the future.
- 9.6 The permanent record for the object must be marked with a change of status to 'de-accessioned', the date of de-accessioning, and the location where the item was sent.
- 9.7 When the de-accessioning of an item involves the transfer of ownership and responsibility for it, appropriate documentation must be completed.



10 Disposal

Introduction

Disposal is the removal of an item from the collection following its de-accessioning.

Policy

Disposal of an item in the Trusts' collections will only be undertaken where it is de-accessioned, or has never been accessioned, and will follow strict disposal procedures endorsed by the Trust.

Guidelines

- 10.1 The Trust may dispose of collection items once they have been de-accessioned, or if they are owned by the Trust but have never been accessioned.
- 10.2 Financial reasons (either to raise money for any purpose or to reduce expenditure) may not be a principal reason for disposal of non-accessioned items
- 10.3 The method of disposal will be recommended by the manager of the collections, in the following order:
 1. Return to donor or donor's family (where the donor is known)
 2. Transfer to another estate
 3. Use as an interpretive or educational aid (including destructive analysis or other use, provided the potential for gaining knowledge justifies the loss of the item)
 4. Sell by public auction where appropriate*
 5. Destroy, recycle, discard+

* NOTE: Staff or families of the Trust cannot acquire de-accessioned items unless they were the original donor. If an item is to be sold, the proposed use of funds must be documented prior to sale.

+NOTE: Destruction will be permitted only once all reasonable efforts have been made to dispose of the item through other methods, or if the item is hazardous or poses a danger to other collections or to staff.



11 Exhibitions

Introduction

An exhibition is a public display, either permanent or temporary, of the work of an artist or group of artists.

Policy

The Trust will continue to promote the work of both artists and community members by holding regular exhibitions of works relevant to the estate or the Herbarium to which it is offered.

Guidelines

- 11.1 The Trust will continue to hold regular temporary exhibitions in which local artists and community members are encouraged to participate.
- 11.2 The Trust will consider any exhibition concerning horticulture, painting, sculpture, jewellery, design, drawings, photographs, slides, herbarium specimens, architecture for display, and will also consider exhibiting historic artefacts, books and scientific equipment⁹.
- 11.3 It must be demonstrated to the relevant estate or the Herbarium that any proposed exhibition will make a positive contribution to the diversity of the estate or the Herbarium, and will extend the reach of the Trust to different target sections of the community¹⁰.
- 11.4 Prior to agreeing to hold an exhibition, the Trust will, if deemed necessary, request a proposal, graphics and timeline of the exhibition from the proposed exhibition's curator/manager.
- 11.5 The Trust will continue to encourage community members to work with elements and ephemera found in gardens to create artworks for display on the estates, as is currently the arrangement at Mount Tomah (see also Section 3 Accessioning).

⁹ Botanic Gardens Trust Cultural Activities Policy, 2006

¹⁰ Ibid.



- 11.6 The Trust will continue to liaise with curators of local galleries.
- 11.7 The Trust will consider any reasonable proposal for an artist in residence program for any of their estates or the Herbarium. If the proposal is declined, full reasoning will be provided.
- 11.8 All exhibitions must have a defined term, which can be as short as one day (or part thereof) or an extended period¹¹.

¹¹ Ibid.



12 Conservation and preservation

Introduction

Conservation is the protection or restoration of a work of art from loss, damage or neglect.

Preservation involves stabilising an item and providing stable display/storage conditions, to inhibit deterioration processes.

Policy

The Trust will make provisions for items within its collections to receive appropriate stabilisation and/or conservation treatment as and when deemed necessary by the estate managers or Librarian.

Guidelines

- 12.1 The Trust will make provisions to stabilise and conserve collection items, rather than restore them.
- 12.2 The Trust will ensure that collection items are displayed in appropriate environmental conditions.
- 12.3 The Trust will ensure that all conservation treatments undertaken on collection items are carried out by trained conservators.
- 12.4 Priority for conservation will be determined by each estate manager or the Librarian.
- 12.5 The decision to commission conservation treatment will be made by the estate manager or Librarian, in consultation with qualified conservators, other Trust staff and management and the donor, when appropriate.



Appendix 1 – Acquiring an Item

