

**LEAMINGTON SPA ART GALLERY AND MUSEUM,
THE ROYAL PUMP ROOMS**

Acquisition and Disposal Policy

**Approved by Warwick District Council
Leisure Committee**

January 2000

INTRODUCTION

In 1999 Warwick District Council relocated the collections of Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum into new premises at the Royal Pump Rooms, The Parade, Leamington Spa. This Acquisition and Disposal Policy reflects the new service provided at the Royal Pump Rooms and the new opportunities for developing the collections of Warwick District Council.

The Acquisition and Disposal Policy follows the guidelines associated with the registration scheme of the Museums and Galleries Commission.

The document has three main Sections: I, Existing Permanent Collections; II, Acquisition Policy; and III, Disposal Policy.

Warwick District Council is the governing body of Leamington Art Gallery and Museum, and throughout the document the term *museum* is used to subsume gallery.

The term "Warwick District" is used to describe the towns, villages and land which fall within the administrative zone controlled by Warwick District Council.

SECTION I : EXISTING PERMANENT COLLECTIONS

The collections noted below are wholly owned by Leamington museum and include no material on loan from other sources.

1 VISUAL ART

The main strengths of the collections lie in the following fields:

1.1 19th and 20th Century British Art

Works mostly range in date from the 1880's to the 1960's and comprise paintings in oil and watercolour, drawings, prints and mixed media. Artists represented in the collection include Vanessa Bell, Sir Terry Frost, Duncan Grant, L.S. Lowry, Stanley Spencer, Carel Weight and Patrick Caulfield.

1.2 19th and 20th Century paintings by Warwickshire artists

Works mostly range in date from the 1840's to the present day, and are mainly paintings in oil and watercolour and drawings, many depicting local scenes. The collection has a particularly strong representation of works by Thomas Baker, John Burgess and Frederick Whitehead.

1.3 16th and 17th Century Dutch and Flemish Art

Works are predominately oil paintings acquired from the Mark Field Bequest of 1953. The collection also includes important works by Abraham Bloemaert, Phillippe de Champaigne and Godfried Schalcken.

1.4 Sculpture

19th and 20th century sculpture, mainly by British sculptors in bronze and marble.

There are about 1200 pictures and 8 pieces of sculpture in the Visual Art collection.

2 APPLIED ART

The collections fall into two main groups:

2.1 Ceramics

A wide variety of functional and decorative ceramics, most made in England in the 18th and 19th centuries. Factories represented in the collection include Bow, Bristol, Chelsea, Worcester and Wedgwood.

There are approximately 400 ceramic items in the collection.

2.2 Glass

This collection falls into two groups. Firstly, the Francis Jahn collection of late 17th to early 19th century drinking glasses, jugs and bottles, which was acquired in 1955. Secondly, a collection of cut glass drinking glasses and jugs made in the major glass factories of the West Midlands, acquired in 1963.

There are about 220 pieces of glass in the collection.

3 NUMISMATICS

British and foreign coins and tokens mainly dating from the late 18th to early 20th centuries. The collection also includes a number of Roman, Medieval and Elizabethan coins.

There are about 1500 coins in the collection.

4 SOCIAL HISTORY

The social history collections encompass a wide variety of material, the vast majority of which is British, and ranging in date from the late 18th century to the present day. Many of the items relate to the history of the district, especially Leamington Spa, during the 19th and 20th centuries. The collections include the following categories of material:

4.1 Community Life

Material related to the community rather than individuals or families. This includes objects used in education, warfare, health, entertainment and sport, for example mineral water bottles, gas masks, theatre programmes and sports medals.

4.2 Domestic and Family Life

Items related to domestic and family life, including the house and life within it. This includes artifacts used in the building of houses, heating and lighting and household management such as bricks, kitchen implements, toys and candlesticks.

4.3 Personal Life

Items belonging to or normally used by one person rather than general domestic items. Examples include clothes, shoes, jewellery and personalised stationery.

4.4 Working Life

Items used or made at work or for business. For example, agricultural tools, mining lamps, whitesmith's tools and shop receipts.

There are about 2300 items in the Social History collection.

5 PHOTOGRAPHS AND PRINTS

Photographs and prints mainly depicting the landscape of Warwickshire (in particular Warwick District) and the lives of its people over the past 2 centuries. The collection is particularly rich in images of Royal Leamington Spa.

There are approximately 2800 items in this collection.

6 MEDICAL EQUIPMENT AND EPHEMERA

The collection includes a number of pieces of equipment, furniture and archival material which are associated with the Royal Pump Rooms and other medical establishments in the district. This collection includes heat lamps, X-ray machines and spa treatment guides.

There are approximately 80 items in this collection.

7 ARCHAEOLOGY

Items excavated or collected locally or in London between the late 19th century and the 1930's.

There are approximately 70 items in this collection.

8 ETHNOGRAPHY

Artifacts produced by the indigenous cultures of Africa (including Egypt), Asia, Oceania, Australia, Americas and Europe. Most of this material appears to have been made and collected during the 19th and early 20th centuries and subsequently donated by local residents to the museum. The collection includes a number of items of national importance such as ceremonial stilts from the Marquesa Islands and a Chinese libation cup made from rhinoceros horn.

There are about 950 items in the collection.

SECTION II: ACQUISITION POLICY

1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

1.1_ The museum will revise and publish its Acquisition and Disposal Policy at least once every five years. Therefore, this policy should be reviewed and published by the close of the year 2005. Acquisitions outside the current policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances, and then only after proper consideration by the governing body of the museum, having regard to the interests of other museums. The West Midlands Regional Museums Council and Museums, Libraries and Archives Council must be notified of any changes to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

1.2 The museum will not acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest, or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question, and that in particular it has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

1.3 So far as British or foreign archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) are concerned, in

addition to the safeguards under paragraph 1.2 above, the museum will not acquire objects in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has reasonable cause to believe that the circumstances of their recovery involved the recent unscientific or intentional destruction or damage of ancient monuments or other known archaeological sites, or involved a failure to disclose the finds to the owner or occupier of the land, or the proper authorities in the case of a possible Treasure Trove (England, Wales and Northern Ireland) or Bona Vacantia (Scotland).

1.4 The museum recognises the need for co-operation and consultation between all museums, both national and provincial, with similar or overlapping interests and collecting policies, and will seek to consult with other such institutions both on specific acquisitions where a conflict of interest is thought possible and, more generally, on defining areas of specialisation. The museums with whom the closest co-operation will need to be maintained are Warwickshire Museum Service, Compton Verney House, The Mead Gallery, Rugby Art Gallery, the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum and The Shakespeare Birthplace Trust.

1.5 The museum has limited good quality storage space and no in-house conservation resources, and will therefore in general accept into the collections only objects which are in good or excellent condition. However, in exceptional circumstances, items which, after cleaning or minor restoration will be in good or excellent condition may be accepted, if the resources are available to carry out the necessary restoration work and if they are very important additions to the collections of a type otherwise unlikely to become available in good condition in the foreseeable future.

2 VISUAL ART

This collection has not significantly increased since the late 1960's. The museum would like to develop it, firstly, by acquiring further works by British artists active during the period most strongly represented in the collection, that is dating from the 1880's to the 1960's; and secondly, by extending the collection to include works by more recent and contemporary British artists of national repute.

In general it is anticipated that in future the Visual Art collection will grow slowly, through the selective

acquisition of good quality works. The policy reflects the fact that:-

- (a) Leamington is one of only three local authority museums in Warwickshire which possesses significant Visual Art collections, and it therefore forms an art resource of countywide importance. Future acquisitions should be of a quality appropriate to the importance of the picture collections.
- (b) The museum's picture store, which was created in 1999 and now offers much larger and higher quality storage facilities than at the Avenue Road site, enables further additions to the collections.
- (c) Good quality pictures are usually expensive, and the museum's small purchase fund will permit only occasional purchases of works of art, especially if financial support is obtained from other bodies, for example from the Friends of Leamington Art Gallery, the purchase grant funds administered by the Victoria and Albert Museum and the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council and the National Art-Collections Fund. The museum should also acquire works by rising or established contemporary artists through its membership of the Contemporary Art Society, and there is in addition the possibility of donations or bequests in this field.

This collection will include three special collections as outlined below:

2.1 Art and Medicine

This new collection will comprise works of art in which artists explore the treatment or experience of physical and mental illness, particularly that associated with spas.

This collection will reflect the history of the Royal Pump Rooms as a medical treatment centre during the 19th and 20th century and create a link between the social history and visual art collections at the museum. It will reflect the current debates in contemporary visual arts concerning art and science.

2.2 Landscape art

The Visual art collections of the museum are dominated by paintings of the landscape and work inspired by the

natural environment. Following on from this tradition we will seek to collect works of contemporary art inspired by the landscape or a sense of place, particularly Warwickshire.

2.3 19th and 20th Century Art by Warwickshire artists

This collection is already strong in works by Thomas Baker, John Burgess and Frederick Whitehead, and the museum will be highly selective regarding future acquisitions of works by these artists, preferring pictures that show facets of the artists' work not currently represented in the collection, or which depict local scenes of particular interest. Other good quality works by artists with established reputations and strong local connections, for example David Cox, will also if possible be acquired for the collection.

It is hoped that some additions to this collection will be made by donation or bequest, but current prices for the principal artists in the collection would also permit the occasional acquisition of suitable works using the museum's purchase fund.

2.4 16th and 17th Century Dutch and Flemish Art

The lack of strong local associations and the high price of such pictures means that the museum will not seek to actively collect in this field. This does not, though, preclude the acceptance of suitable works presented as donations or bequests.

2.5 Sculpture

The museum will seek to add to its small collection of 20th century British sculpture, particularly (but not exclusively) pieces with local connections. The museum may also acquire earlier objects which have significant local associations.

3 APPLIED ART

These collections have not significantly expanded since the early 1960's, partly as a result of inadequate storage facilities. In general it is anticipated that in future the decorative art collections will grow slowly, through the selective acquisition of good quality works. The policy reflects the fact that:-

- (a) Leamington is one of the only two local authority museums in Warwickshire which possesses significant decorative art collections, and it therefore forms an art resource of countywide importance. Future acquisitions should be of a quality appropriate to the importance of the collections.
- (b) The ceramics and glass store, which was created in 1999 now offers high quality storage facilities. However this has fairly limited storage space and consequently the acquisition of large groups of decorative art items and those of a large size will need to be carefully considered.
- (c) The decorative art collections, with the exception of ceramics, are so narrow in the type and date of the production of the objects that it would be impossible, within the museum's current resources, to acquire suitable pieces to fill gaps in these collections or bring them up to date.
- (d) Applied art items by major craftspeople living within Warwick District will be collected within the category of 20th Century Local Craft.

3.1 Warwickshire Makers Post 1900

The museum will seek to acquire good quality works in a broad range of media by craftspeople with established reputations, and who have lived or worked in Warwick District during the 20th century or currently do so. It is hoped that some additions to the collection will be made by donation or bequest. Current prices would also permit the acquisition of suitable works using the museum's purchase fund, especially if financial support is obtained from other bodies, for example from The Friends of Leamington Art Gallery or the purchase grant funds administered by the Victoria and Albert Museum and M.L.A.C. and the National Art-Collections Fund. This collection includes two main areas of collection within the museum.

3.2 Ceramics

It is intended to add to the existing collection of predominately British 18th and 19th century factory produced wares, and to acquire works by late 19th and 20th century studio and art potters, particularly those with local associations. These works may also fall under the criteria of 20th century Craft by Warwickshire Makers post

1900. An active collecting policy will be adopted, including the purchase of appropriate pieces as well as the acceptance of donations or bequests of suitable items.

3.3 Glass

The collection of British glass is very narrow in the type of wares within it and the dates of their production. Consequently, only pieces which fill gaps within the current parameters of this collection and which have very strong and important links with the district will be collected. More recent works which fall within the criteria of Warwickshire Craft post 1900 will be actively collected.

4 SOCIAL HISTORY

It is intended that the Social History collections should reflect the history and nature of human life in the locality, particularly that area administered by Warwick District Council. Much of the material added to the Social History collections is likely to be acquired by donation or bequest, rather than purchase, and the most important constraint on developing the collections will be the availability of storage space.

Much of the social history collections are concerned with the history of Royal Leamington Spa. The museum will seek to continue to develop these collections, particularly through the acquisition of objects which fill gaps in the existing holdings. The museum will also try to expand the sparse existing collections of Social History material from elsewhere in the District, including Kenilworth and Warwick. It is preferable that the material collected should have clear associations with the collecting area, i.e. that it was produced or used by local people. However, where there are gaps in the collections otherwise likely to remain unfilled, objects from further afield might be accepted.

In addition to the types of material already represented in the Social History collections, the museum may also use newer technologies to record information relevant to the locality and the collections. For example digital mini disc recordings could be used for an oral history archive, and video tape, and CDROM might be used to store other forms of evidence.

5 ARCHAEOLOGY

The Warwickshire Museum Service provides the Museums and Galleries Commission approved storage for archaeological material from the county of Warwickshire, and the District

Council will not acquire further archaeological material for the collections of Leamington Spa Art Gallery and Museum.

However, the District Council reserves the right to collect further archaeological material directly associated with Kenilworth Abbey, in instances in which the new acquisitions enhance the substantial collection of material excavated from the site in the 19th and 20th centuries, of which the Council is now custodian.

6 ETHNOGRAPHY

The Ethnography collection, although not directly related to the historic culture of the locality, reflects the relationship between Leamington's residents and the wider world during the 19th and early 20th centuries.

The collection has more recently assumed a further importance in that it could be used to present a broad perspective on the diversity of human culture, which would be pertinent to the multi-ethnic nature of the local community.

Therefore, the museum will only actively seek to acquire further material for the Ethnography collection which has played an important role in the history of residents of the District or which is closely associated with or complements the existing collection.

7 NUMISMATICS

The collection of coins and tokens is very diverse and many of the items are not directly related to the history of the area. Consequently, the museum will not actively seek to acquire further material for this collection with the exception of coins and tokens which have strong links with the Warwick district.

8 PRINTS AND PHOTOGRAPHS

Prints and photographs will be acquired to support the Social History collections in reflecting the history and nature of human life in the locality, particularly that area administered by Warwick District Council. Much of the material is likely to be acquired by donation or bequest, rather than purchase. The two dimensional nature of this material means that there should be few problems with storing future acquisitions.

It is desirable to acquire items which fill gaps in the existing holdings, particularly images which show the lives of local people and the towns of Kenilworth and Warwick.

SECTION III: DISPOSAL POLICY

1 GENERAL PRINCIPLES

- 1.1** By definition a museum has a long-term purpose and must possess (or intend to acquire) permanent collections in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body accepts the principle that there is a strong presumption against the disposal of any items in the museum's collections except as set out below.
- 1.2** The governing body of the museum recognises that it may in some instances be in the public interest to transfer items from the collections of the museum to other public museums. In accordance with this principle the governing body has on occasion permitted transfers to other museums; for example in 1989 the museum's natural history collections were transferred to neighbouring museums, some material going to the Warwickshire Museum Service and the remainder to Coventry City Museum Service.
- 1.3** The governing body is prepared to consider further transfers to public museums, provided that the recipient museum is registered with MLAC and the transfer is carried out in accordance with the principles set out in this section.
- 1.4** In those cases where the museum is legally free to dispose of an item (if this is in doubt, advice will be sought) it is agreed that any decision to sell or otherwise dispose of material from the collections will be taken only after due consideration. Decisions to dispose of items will not be made with the principal aim of generating funds. Once a decision to dispose of an item has been taken, priority will be given to retaining the item within the public domain and with this in view it will be offered first, by exchange, gift or sale to Registered museums before disposal to other interested individuals or organisations is considered.
- 1.5** In cases in which an arrangement for the exchange, sale or gift of material is not being made with an individual registered museum, the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of material. This will normally be through an announcement in the Museums Association's *Museums Journal* and/or other appropriate professional journals. The announcement will indicate the

number and nature of the specimens or objects involved, and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed.

1.6 A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by exchange, sale, gift or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections), will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone. Full records will be kept of all such decisions and the items involved and proper arrangements made for the preservation and /or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records where practicable.

1.7 Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections. This should normally mean the purchase of further acquisitions but in exceptional cases improvements relating to the care of collections may be justifiable. Advice on these cases will be sought from MLAC.

1.8 Where a museum object has been acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation, permission from that organisation will be sought before the object is deaccessioned or transferred to another museum. If the object is sold repayment of the original grant may be required.

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