COLLECTION POLICY

GEORGIA O’KEEFFE MUSEUM

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Preamble

The Georgia O’Keeffe Museum (the "Museum") collections are administered according to the goals, policies and procedures enumerated here, which have been approved by the Museum’s Board of Trustees and correspond with standards established by the American Association of Museums (AAM) and the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD).

Mission Statement

The Museum is dedicated to the artistic legacy of Georgia O’Keeffe, her life and American modernism.

Duties of the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee have the following powers with respect to the collection:

The power to accept or decline gifts or bequests of works of art and authorize the purchase of artworks is vested in the Board of Trustees and the Executive Committee upon recommendation of the Acquisition and Collections Committee.

The power to deaccession works of art for sale, exchange, or other means of disposal irrespective of market value is vested in the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee upon the recommendation of the Acquisition and Collections Committee.

The Board delegates the governance and oversight of the collection, and these specific powers, to the Acquisition and Collections Committee (the "Committee"). The vote of the Committee is effective without further action by the Board, with the exception of deaccessions, which must be approved by the full Board. All actions of the Committee will be reported to the Board of Trustees and Executive Committee.

Daily responsibility for the collection is delegated to the Director and the Director of Curatorial Affairs, who in turn delegate to the appropriate professional staff of the Museum.

Collection Overview and Objectives

In accordance with the Museum’s Articles of Incorporation, the primary collection mission of the Museum is to collect works by Georgia O’Keeffe, especially those that reveal the highest level of her artistic achievement, and to promote and encourage public awareness of, interest in, and appreciation of these objects through appropriate education and exhibition programs that seek to define the significance of her contribution to the history of American modernism.

The Museum holds in the public trust the world's largest collection of works by Georgia
O'Keeffe. The collection includes works in bronze, charcoal, pastel, pencil, oil, and watercolor. In that it represents most of the many subjects O'Keeffe addressed in her art, including abstractions, architecture, landscapes, and natural and found objects, it amply documents her achievement during the eight decades (1901-1984) that she was active as an artist with examples of her finest work from each decade.

A secondary collection goal includes the acquisition of artifacts and resource materials related to O’Keeffe and her contemporaries that illuminate public understanding of O’Keeffe’s artistic contribution. These materials include, but are not limited to art materials, diaries, letters, manuscripts, preliminary studies for works of art, sketch books, and photographs of, by, or about O’Keeffe.

The Museum has received gifts of numerous photographs of O’Keeffe dating from the 1910s through the 1980s and of the houses she owned in Abiquiu and at the Ghost Ranch, New Mexico. Many are by noted photographers, such as William Clift, Eliot Porter, Malcolm Varon, Todd Webb, and Myron Wood. The work of Alfred Stieglitz comprises a distinct area of strength.

As noted in the Museum’s Mission and Strategic Plan, the Museum will accept gifts and collect works by other American modernists, including significant work by O’Keeffe’s contemporaries. While not its primary collecting objective, the Museum has received gifts of artwork by artists other than O’Keeffe after they have been exhibited at the Museum in its changing exhibition program.

As a charitable, educational, non-profit, private, and tax exempt, institution, the Museum keeps objects in its collections for the benefit of the public.

The Museum recognizes that collections are not static and must be improved continually in terms of quality and breadth in order to implement current and future educational, exhibition, and research objectives, and to document O’Keeffe’s artistic achievement as thoroughly as possible. In keeping with professional museum practices, professional staff will devise active strategies for improving the collection through a variety of techniques, including acquisitions, whether through bequest, exchange, purchase, trade and/or gift, and deaccession of works from the collection.

These policies are to be reviewed at least every two years and, as necessary, revised to align with the Museum’s strategic priorities and reflect the best professional practices in the field.
Policies

I. Acquisitions (Bequests, Gifts, Purchases)

All acquisitions must meet three primary conditions for acquisition: a) Is the work relevant to and consistent with the purposes and activities of the Museum? b) Can the Museum provide the work proper storage, protection, and preservation under conditions that comply with professional museum standards and that ensure their care and availability for Museum purposes? c) Can title to work be obtained free and clear, without conditions or restrictions?

Acquisitions must be relevant to and consistent with the Museum collection and exhibition purposes and activities that are outlined here and reiterated in Museum bylaws. Before objects are acquired, the Director and the Director of Curatorial Affairs determine that the Museum can effectively store, protect, and maintain the objects according to standards established by the AAM. Except under unusual circumstances, acquisitions should come to the Museum with no restrictions on future use, sale, copyright, or exhibition. Whenever possible, the Museum shall secure copyright as well as full title.

Purchases and the acceptance of gifts and bequests into Museum collections are the responsibility of the Director and the professional staff, who are authorized to spend up to $10,000 per year on the acquisition of collection materials without prior board approval. Acquisitions valued over $10,000 require the endorsement of the Acquisitions and Collections and the Executive Committees, prior to a full vote of approval from the Board of Trustees. All acquisition recommendations will be accompanied by a financial impact statement. The Acquisitions and Collections Committee members serve at the pleasure of the President.

Acceptance of Gifts from and by Living Artists

Artist should be nationally known in that his/her work is represented in nationally prominent museums, such as the National Gallery of Art, Museum of Modern Art, Smithsonian American Art Museum, or Whitney Museum of American Art. Gift should be related to the modernist art tradition (late-nineteenth century - present). Gift should be unencumbered by any restrictions. Work should be of a quality that strengthens the collection and enhances the museum’s ability to pursue its mission.

Promised Gifts

Promised gifts will be presented to the Acquisitions and Collections Committee for approval as an acquisition at the time that the promise to give the work is offered. A legally binding promissory document will accompany the gift. The work will not be accessioned until the gift is actually completed.
Fractional Gifts

Fractional gifts are accepted only if the remainder is a promised gift accompanied by a legally binding promissory document. Such promissory agreements must contain provisions requiring that the Museum will take possession of the work as required by law and in keeping with the Museum’s mission.

II. Appraisals and Authentications

Museum employees are not allowed to professionally appraise or authenticate objects for any external entity. Appraisals are provided by qualified appraisers. The Museum has a longstanding policy not to provide appraisals to donors. Under current IRS guidelines, the Museum cannot act as a qualified appraiser because of inherent conflict with its role as a donee. If a donor asks for assistance in locating an appropriate appraiser, staff may suggest several qualified appraisers or resources, including the American Society of Appraisers, Appraisers Association of America, International Society of Appraisers, Sotheby's, and Christie's. More than one name must be given. Museum employees are not allowed to authenticate an object for any external entity.

III. Deaccessions

As stated by the AAMD, both the deaccessioning and the disposal of a work of art from a museum’s collection require exceptional care and should reflect policy rather than reaction to the exigencies of a particular moment. For exceptional acquisitions and upgrades, however, it is appropriate to deaccession related works of art. Proceeds from a deaccessioned work of art are used only to acquire other works of art. Income on invested proceeds from deaccessioned works of art can be used for direct care of the collections, per Section V, Direct Care, below.Judicious deaccessioning can improve the quality of the collection without compromising its depth, breadth, or historical integrity.

Deaccessioning occurs only if an object is no longer relevant to the Museum collections, if its sale will improve the collections, and if the sale is in the interest of the public, public trust and scholarly or cultural communities the Museum serves.

Objects can be deaccessioned only upon the recommendation of the Museum Director and Director of Curatorial Affairs, with endorsement from the Acquisitions and Collections and the Executive Committees, and an affirmative vote from the Board of Trustees. The preferred method of deaccession is through public auction.
Deaccessioning cannot occur if it conflicts with the interests, objectives, and legal status of the Museum. Objects cannot be deaccessioned to a member of the Board of Trustees, the Museum staff, or to their representatives, agents or families.

Before deaccessioning a work, it must be determined through all reasonable efforts that the Museum is legally free to deaccession the work. Objects to which conditions or restrictions apply cannot be deaccessioned until reasonable efforts are made to comply with them. Where conditions or restrictions apply regarding the use or disposition of an object, the Museum proceeds as follows:

It will observe mandatory conditions or restrictions unless deviation from their terms is authorized by a court of competent jurisdiction.

Considering the monetary value of the works in question, if an object was given to the Museum by an individual, if it is practical and reasonable, the Museum will make reasonable efforts to notify the donor if it intends to deaccession a gift within a ten year period from the date of receiving it or within the donor’s lifetime, whichever is less.

If there is a need for the clarification or interpretation of conditions or restrictions on works, the Museum will seek the advice of its legal counsel.

The Museum will maintain complete documentation of deaccession transactions that will be retained in Museum files in the office of the registrar.

It is important that the deaccession of objects should not limit scholarly knowledge of them. When objects have been removed from the Museum’s collections, the Museum will retain files on these objects and make them available to scholars on request.

IV. Culturally Sensitive Materials

In the event that the Museum obtains any items that might be considered culturally sensitive, the Director and the Board of Trustees will draft and adopt a specific policy regarding the acquisition, exhibition and repatriation of such materials.

V. Care of Collection

Since the Museum is first and foremost a repository of works of art, its mission centers on the care of works of art in its collections. The Museum shall preserve works of art in accordance with the highest standards of conservation. The Museum shall provide a safe and appropriate environment for the collections, with effective security and environmental control, for the benefit of present and future generations. The Museum shall maintain an Emergency/Disaster Plan. The
Museum’s preservation standards shall be maintained for works of art on loan to the Museum or borrowed from the Museum.

The Museum’s Conservation Department is charged with the long-term preservation of the collection through conservation treatment and shall maintain exact documentation of the examination and treatment of artwork. The Museum recognizes the importance of scientific research in the examination and analysis of works of art in its collection. The Museum’s Conservation Department is responsible for the technical examination of the Museum’s collection and for the development of long-term preventative conservation strategies and methods.

The Museum shall follow the guidelines of the Museum’s Conservation Assessment and Treatment Plan, which was adopted in 1997, as well as standards established by the AAM.

One of the Museum’s primary goals is to provide safe and stable environments and settings for works that ensure their preservation. It does this by evaluating and revising its operating procedures for collection care, conservation, and management on an ongoing basis.

**Direct Care**

The care and stewardship of the collection is one of the most fundamental responsibilities entrusted to the Museum by the public. To uphold this responsibility the Museum devotes substantial resources to the direct care of the collection. Notwithstanding any other provision of the Museum’s Collection Policy, and in accordance with the guidelines of the Association of Art Museum Directors (“AAMD”) and the American Alliance of Museums (“AAM”) and the law, all proceeds received from the disposition of deaccessioned artworks may be used for the acquisition of art or direct care of works in the collections, and the following policy will govern the Museum’s use of said funds.

For the purposes of this policy, and according to AAM, direct care of collections means “to invest in the existing collections by enhancing their life, usefulness or quality and thereby ensuring they will continue to benefit the public.” The Museum may use income generated from the proceeds of deaccessioned art for costs associated with the conservation, preservation, registration, maintenance, storage, and safeguarding of collections, including analysis, treatment, inventory, research, framing, documentation, the related information technology required to assure full documentation, and the provision of safe and secure, climate controlled storage and museum spaces. These costs can include, among other things, a share of salaries for staff primarily engaged in direct care, as well as direct care activities by outside vendors and contract staff and the materials, equipment, systems, and facilities used in connection with direct care activities outlined by this policy. Examples of these activities include:

- Conservation
  - Condition Reporting and Documentation
  - Analysis
  - Treatment
The Museum’s Director of Finance will confirm that any proposed direct care expenditure complies with this policy and any applicable accounting requirements. The identification of direct care expenses for which income on deaccession funds may be used as outlined in this policy shall be reviewed by a committee consisting of the Director; Curator of Fine Art; the Head of Conservation; Registrar/Collections Manager; Head of Research Collections and Services and the Director of Finance. In addition, this committee shall develop a recommendation as to the appropriate and allocable share of salaries and facility costs associated with direct care activities outlined above. The recommended direct care expenses and allocable share of salary and facility expenses shall be presented to the Committee and then the Board of Trustees for review and approval. Changes to this policy require the approval of the full Board.

**Emergency Plan**

As part of its regular operations, the Museum has prepared a thoughtful, comprehensive, and effective Emergency Plan, which outlines response measures to protect visitors and staff, to prevent destruction and reduce damage to its collections, documentation, and facilities in the event an emergency occurs.

The plans prime objectives are: (1) to provide for the safety of human life and (2) to avoid the loss of property and resources. In the plan the Museum addresses the safety and preservation of its collections and equipment, facilities, the security of its vital records, and the restoration of normal activity. The Director of I.T. and Operations is responsible for overseeing and implementing these policies, in consultation with conservation and curatorial staff. This plan shall be regularly reviewed and revised as necessary and all appropriate staff will receive regular training to ensure they understand the plan and are prepared to implement emergency measures when necessary.
All works in the permanent collection are housed in the Museum or Research Center vaults unless the work is on exhibition or loan. The registrar maintains a master list of the contents of the vault and a master list of works that are on exhibit or loan.

VI. Collection Documentation

The Museum, through its curatorial, registrar, conservation and archival departments, shall maintain accurate, up-to-date records on the acquisition, identification, location and condition of all objects in the collection, as well as ongoing activities such as exhibitions, research, and correspondence with donors, artists and scholars. All records created and received in the transaction of the Museum’s proper business are the property of the Museum and must not be dispersed or destroyed except in accordance with its records retention policy. Complete documentation of all transactions for objects in the collection are created and maintained by the registrar.

The Museum shall make available to qualified researchers and scholars materials relating to the collections unless they are confidential or would suffer physical harm if handled.

VII. Insurance

The Museum maintains a comprehensive insurance policy covering its collections both while they are on the Museum’s premises or on loan to other institutions. The Museum also carries comprehensive, wall-to-wall insurance on all loans coming into the Museum from other institutions. From time to time the estimated market value of artworks in the collection will be reviewed and updated as necessary.

VIII. Ethics

The Museum has adopted and adheres to the AAM’s *Code of Ethics for Museums (2000)*, as well as those codes of ethics endorsed by the International Council of Museums, the Association of Art Museum Directors and other professional groups. As stated in AAM’s *The New Museum Registration Methods*, the basic tenets of these codes prohibit staff from using their positions for personal gain through such activities as dealing, accepting commissions or gifts of more than trivial value from dealers or other vendors, personal collecting that competes with the museum, appraising or authenticating objects for fees, acquiring stolen or contravened property for the museum, or deaccessioning objects to provide for purposes other than enhancing collections.

IX. Loans
The Museum policy encourages and fosters loans to institutions and museums who are planning exhibitions that enhance public understanding of the art of Georgia O’Keeffe. However, the Museum’s ability to loan works by O’Keeffe is affected by the fact that its permanent collection is made up of a limited number of works by the artist and that these works are needed primarily for exhibitions at the Museum. It is the responsibility of the curatorial staff, in conjunction with the Committee, to maintain a balanced exhibition and loan program that ensures the quality of Museum exhibitions, supports worthwhile projects at other institutions, and safeguards the collection.

The Museum has adopted and follows the new AAM American Art Museums Guidelines on Exhibiting Borrowed Objects and has incorporated these guidelines in its loan and exhibition procedures.

**Loans Outgoing**

Loans of the Museum’s art, artifacts or resource materials are limited to recognized professional museums whose facilities meet standards set by the Museum. The primary consideration for loans to other institutions is that their utilization in exhibitions by that institution will make a meaningful contribution to the public understanding of Georgia O’Keeffe and to the field of American art. Loans to other professional museums can be considered if they provide a particular educational and/or public relations benefit to the Museum. Such loans will undergo special scrutiny, especially for sensitive material such as pastels or watercolors, to be certain that the primary goals of the Museum are not compromised.

The quality of the visitor experience in our galleries is our first priority and the cumulative impact of outgoing loans will be considered before recommending approval. The Trustees recognize the limited number of paintings and watercolors in the collection and recommend that no more than 10 percent of the most important 400 works of art are on loan at any given time.

Loan requests must be made in writing; at least 6 months in advance of the date works are needed. They must be recommended by the Museum Director and curatorial staff (curator(s), conservator, and registrar), who present them to the Acquisition and Collections Committee for approval. The Director reports approved loans to the Executive Committee. All loan requests received but not recommended by the Director and curatorial staff will be reported to the Acquisitions and Collections Committee.

Objects cannot be considered for loan until their condition has been determined as fit for travel by the conservator and approved by the Director and Director of Curatorial Affairs. Borrowers understand that loaned objects must be returned in the same physical condition in which they are received. Other institutions will not clean, repair, retouch, unframe, or otherwise alter the objects, except with written permission of the Museum’s Director. Any damage must be reported immediately to the Museum, whether it occurs in transit or on the borrower’s premises and regardless of responsibility.
Loans Incoming

The Museum recognizes the significance of borrowing for exhibitions and examination. Each object borrowed must have an incoming loan agreement which specifies the duration (beginning and ending dates) and purpose of the loan. Special consideration is required for loan periods exceeding one year unless it is for a specific exhibition (which period may exceed a year).