

COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICY for WARMUN ART CENTRE COMMUNITY COLLECTION

Version: 26 August 2024 (for annual review at the Warmun Art Centre Annual General Meeting).

PURPOSE

A Collection Management Policy is a set of rules about who can look at the Warmun Community Collection, and how it will be cared for in the future. It will make sure the Warmun Community Collection is well organised, looked after, and accessible to the community. The Art Centre Board will oversee its protection to help keep Gija culture strong.

POLICY DETAILS

Documentation

Maintain accurate records of the Collection

1. Current records are kept in a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet (.xlsx), *Warmun Community Collection Master Catalogue*, on a laptop dedicated to collection management at Warmun Art Centre, with a backup at the Grimwade Centre and on the University of Melbourne's SharePoint site. Hard copies of the catalogue are also housed at Warmun Art Centre.

2. To reduce risks to the Collection, including physical loss of an object, and/or the loss of information:

- The *Master Catalogue* is routinely checked and updated. This happens whenever new items enter the Collection, and every six months during a Collection audit (checking drawers and storage to make sure that no items have been misplaced or lost).
- The *Master Catalogue* file needs strict version control, clearly showing the name of the person and date updated. This will ensure a single source of truth for information about the Collection.
- Physical copies of the catalogue are retained to safeguard against technology failure. These copies are dated to make sure that the Catalogue is the latest version, and all versions are identified by date and the person who updated them.

3. If adding a new item to the Collection, document the item on the *Acquisition Data Entry Sheet*. Each item in the Collection should include the following details, at a minimum:

- Accession number (also ensure the number on each object is correct and legible)
- Date of record
- Artist/maker (if known)
- Type of object
- Location of object
- Image of object
- Subject matter and provenance (if known, and by who)
- Brief outline of condition

Risk Management & Collection Care

The Community Collection is primarily stored in the Red House – Media Lab and Storage, on-site at the Warmun Art Centre. Collection items are sometimes moved to the Commercial Gallery Building for display or the Green House, which houses deceased estate works. Proper updates of documentation in the *Master Catalogue* are required whenever Collection objects are moved from the storage rooms. This ensures a critical distinction is maintained between Collection works and those in the commercial gallery.

The Collection Care Strategy should be reviewed regularly, considering the following:

1. Determine which risks would cause most damage, and the likelihood of this occurring.
2. A set of collection care and management practices needs to be in place to reduce these risks.
3. Staff member/s need to be trained to carry out collection care and management tasks. This would help address risks such as:
 - Dissociation – Maintain up to date collection records, including location movement for display or loans. If there are no good records artworks and objects can easily go missing.
 - Fire and water – Develop disaster response plan in case of emergency (fire and flood)
 - Incorrect and fluctuating temperature and RH – Ensure temperature control equipment is operational and used appropriately. Monitor collection particularly during wet season and periods of heavy rain/increased humidity.
 - Pests – No food or drink in collection areas. Monitor for pests
 - Pollutants – Regular housekeeping (vacuuming and dusting) in storage and display areas to minimise pollutants (dust)
 - Thieves and vandals – Ensure collection areas are locked when not being accessed, this includes a daily door check. In the case of a break-in, verify collection items have not been stolen or damaged.

Conservation

In addition to ongoing collection care, conservation actions are required. It is important to:

- Assess the Collection when the catalogue is reviewed and updated and identify any items that are in poor condition or need conservation or better protection.
- Identify the Collection priorities as this determines which objects need to be prioritised. This may be individual items or groups of objects that hold the greatest significance and/or material vulnerabilities.
- Consider the health and safety of those accessing and the Collection. Make sure that people have help if they need to lift heavy or awkward artworks or objects. If there is any mould make sure that they are wearing P2 mask to avoid inhaling mould spores.
- Develop a plan of action for the long-term preservation and management of the Collection. This includes what can and should be done in the short term (1 year) and medium term (3 years), as well as what will take longer to achieve (5-10 years).
- Collaborate with a conservator who can help train staff to undertake these activities.

Acquisitions & Deaccessioning

The Collection may continue to grow in line with the Statement of Purpose. This means that new acquisitions:

- Must demonstrate relevance to Gija intergenerational sharing, in particular the continuation of Gija thought, culture and society
- Must be donated unconditionally, with objects being available for community access and research in line with cultural restrictions
- Be donated by those with appropriate ownership of the object
- Should be in reasonable condition
- Can be readily stored and cared for by WAC
- Must be documented as soon as it is received by the Art Centre (see *Appendix 2: Acquisition Data Entry Sheet*)
- Must be agreed for acquisition by the Warmun Art Centre Board and the decision recorded in the Minutes of the Meeting.

Collection items may be deaccessioned if:

- The object does not demonstrate relevance to the Collection's Statement of Purpose
- The object is damaged beyond repair and a report documenting the scope of its damage, and the impact of its loss has been prepared and submitted to the Art Centre Board and the family of the person who made it
- The object has no provenance or known local connection
- There is a reasonable request for return from the donor or their family
- Must be agreed for deaccession by the Warmun Art Centre Board and the decision recorded in the Minutes of the Meeting.
- The object may be removed from the Collection by return to the donor or their family, or be destroyed, depending on the circumstances and context of its deaccessioning.

Resources

As the custodian of the Warmun Community Collection on behalf of the Warmun Community the Warmun Art Centre will take reasonable action to ensure there are dedicated resources to ongoing collection management. Required resources include:

- Space – the Red House – Media Lab and Storage is the primary collection store and workroom.
 - As the Collection grows, including the incorporation of photographic, audiovisual and digital material, the space may become overcrowded. Further collection organisation and/or expansion is required to accommodate the Collection.
 - There are work desks in the space. These must be kept free of Collection items to ensure adequate work space for personnel.
- Storage – The Collection is housed in purpose-built BAC plan cabinets. These units provide passive insulation, protection from light and dust. Drawer labelling needs to be maintained to reduce the risk of dissociation. If funding is available, archival-quality housing such as supports for objects, lining of drawers and so on should be used.
- Equipment – Equipment needs to be assigned to collection management, including photography equipment, a dedicated computer, collection management software (FileMaker Pro, Microsoft Office), digital storage devices and internet access for the Media Lab is required. An equipment and software audit needs to be undertaken on

a regular basis to determine if existing resources are suitable, or if upgrades are needed.

- Funding – Warmun Art Centre covers general building amenities such as electricity and security. Funding for collection management work and materials is inconsistent and relies on external funding. A cycle of grant applications to support the needs of the Collection needs to be put in place.
- Personnel – WAC employs 6-7 staff members. While collection management falls under the remit of some staff, commercial gallery operations remain a priority. One staff member needs to be responsible to care for the Collection, as outlined in a Position Description which includes ongoing provision for training. It is also important to have contacts for appropriate persons for work on secret/sacred materials.

REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed annually at the Warmun Art Centre Annual General Meeting.