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Association of Art Museum Directors University/College Museums

"Art on Campus" Guidelines

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Museums on College and University Campuses

Great colleges and universities have great art museums with distinctive collections that enhance the academic and life-long learning experiences of students, faculty, staff and the general public. Museums on college and university campuses exist to serve the academic missions of their parent institutions, contributing to research and teaching in the visual arts as well as other academic disciplines across the curriculum. Whereas students and faculty constitute the core audience of a college or university museum, often the museum also has a mandate to serve the wider community and thus brings university and community audiences together through shared experiences with art. Museums on campus also contribute to the quality of life, which makes it possible to recruit and retain faculty and students of the highest caliber, those who appreciate the power of art to educate, enlighten and inspire.

I. The University Museum and Loans on Campus

Management of the collections is the responsibility of museum professionals who are cognizant of and devoted to principles of care and stewardship embedded in the policies and procedures, laws and regulations, of the parent institution or controlling branch of government as well as in the ethical and professional standards of the accrediting agency, the American Association of Museums (AAM), and in the standards of operation expressed in *Professional Practices in Art Museums* through the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD).

Loan of objects from the museum's collections, therefore, for the decoration of university offices is not normally consistent with the educational mission of the museum; such loans may compromise the museum's professional standards of collection care and management and may even betray the intent of benefactors, donors, and patrons who make gifts of art or provide the funds to purchase works of art.

Although the loan of objects from the university museum to campus offices may not be an optimal arrangement, due to tradition or upon requests from university or college administrators, it may be necessary or desirable to grant such requests, in order, for example, to work more smoothly with administrators in the museum's line of governance, to gain their support for the museum's collections and programming and to showcase the museum to guests in administrative offices. Generally university or college museums, however, do not routinely loan works outside the train of governance, i.e., to other university departments or units except after due deliberation and consideration of the risks to the work of art, and in no case except by special permission of the museum's director or his or her designated agent. Normally, campus loans of museum objects are only made to the offices of the President of the University, the Provost/Vice-President for Academic Affairs, or, in rare cases, a dean or department head. In such cases, the director and his or her designated agent will determine whether such offices or extramural facilities have adequate climate controls, electronic security systems or security officers, and adjustable light levels. Only under exceptional, highly controlled, and limited circumstances, if ever, are works loaned for location in corridors or other unsecured areas, and never in residence halls, dining halls, kitchens, or bathrooms.

Some university museums may lend works of art from their collections for public spaces as part of their educational mission, if they can rule out the possibility of damage or theft. Fragile works, works on paper, works with conservation problems, or works of primary

importance to the museum's collection may be restricted from a campus loan program. The museum may choose to limit loans to objects of lesser value, infrequent use, lower environmental sensitivity, and to those peripheral to the museum's artistic programming, with the clear disclaimer that the number and variety of such objects meeting those criteria are not numerous. In addition, the academic museum may want to limit works available for campus loans to those that the museum is unlikely to display in its exhibition spaces, to those unlikely to be studied by faculty, students, or visiting scholars while not on display, or to those unlikely to be requested for loan by other institutions.

Rather than place objects on "permanent," "quasi-permanent," or "long-term" loan, the museum may restrict the loan agreement to a predetermined term with routine condition reporting by the registrar or other trained staff.

Before the loan agreement is implemented, museum staff typically performs a site visit of the office or space where the work is to be displayed and prepare a risk assessment. The loan agreement may stipulate that the museum staff is responsible for moving, handling, and installing objects from its collection and that such objects shall not be altered, cleaned, restored, repaired, retouched, or changed in any way, including their mats, mounts, or frames, by the borrowing office for any reason without the express permission of the museum's director or his or her designated agent. The loan agreement may indicate any actions necessary for regular maintenance.

Likewise, the agreement may specifically state that no work may be moved without permission from the museum; the museum staff must de-install or handle any relocation of the work, unless in an emergency. The museum may require that a label include not only the work's identification and owner but further interpretative text about the artist and the object. As with any other object in the museum's collection, all rights and reproduction requests regarding

the work should be directed to the museum's registrar or his or her designee; the loaned object may not be photographed or reproduced in any way without prior, written permission from the museum's registrar.

Other stipulations that the museum is entitled to make in the loan agreement are that works of art may not be installed in corridors or unsupervised public areas; that the location for the art must have proper security, i.e., be locked, when no one is present; that mending plates or security screws be used to hang the works so that they are not readily movable or removable or susceptible to theft of opportunity; that, if works of art are hung or located in areas where food and drink are allowed, the museum may require plexiglas or glass protection for the works at the borrower's expense; and that works of art are never to be stored by the borrower for any reason, even during renovation projects, without notification and permission from the museum. The museum has the right to expect and demand that any damage to a loaned work of art, theft or change in its condition, must be reported immediately to the museum's designated agent, usually the registrar or curator.

According to policies and procedures in place for the borrower and lender, the museum may make the following provisions to its loan agreement: 1. A member of the museum's staff must document and report any incident of theft or damage, and, consequently, the borrower should not attempt to "clean up" or hide damage to the work; and, 2. In the event of theft, vandalism, damage, or deterioration owing to negligence, the borrower may be held responsible.

A university museum may have a registrar, curator, or other staff member dedicated to art on campus, and, in such a case, he or she typically reports to the museum's director. Whether or not such a position exists, it may be noted in any on-campus loan policy that providing art for non-public, decorative displays in offices or other facilities is not a primary

function or goal of the museum, which performance has limited staff and financial resources to devote to any such program.

The museum may wish to require that such campus loans conform to accreditation standards of the American Association of Museums (for example, with appropriate inventory, security, and climate controls), be in accord with the museum's educational mission, and follow the standards and best practices set forth in AAMD's *Professional Practices in Museums*.

The museum may require that it have the ability to recoup costs of loans from its collections to campus offices. In this case, the borrower would be assessed any handling fees or costs for labeling, framing, insurance (if applicable) and conservation. Any costs associated with special matting, framing, or replacement of glass with ultra-violet filtering glass would be the responsibility of the borrower. It would be the prerogative of the university museum to charge the borrowing office any insurance costs associated with the object including the deductible if the work is damaged or destroyed.

The museum may require that all loans are subject to inventory controls by the museum's staff and periodic condition reports and further that if at any time, the designated staff determines and informs the director that the work requires conservation treatments or is in danger of damage from light, temperature, or humidity variations, the work should be immediately recalled. Moreover, the loan agreement may stipulate that the work is always subject to recall by the museum should it be needed for research, exhibition, or conservation, or for any other purpose in conformity with the museum's mission. The museum may also decide that the loan agreement should specify protection by the borrower from the following conditions: fire, theft, exposure to water, excessive humidity, excessive dryness, airborne pollutants, food and liquids, as well as from direct or reflected sunlight, strong artificial light, fluorescent light, or proximity to heat sources. Further, the museum may want to stipulate that

the object may not be located near heating ducts, pipes, space heaters, or humidifiers and that no work owned by the museum should ever be located in an area where smoking is permitted.

II. The University Museum and Public Art Programs

The core mission of the college or university museum, like the institution of which it is a part, is education, research, and service, in particular, visual-arts teaching and scholarship through the original works of art in the museum's care. The installation of works of art in public places throughout the campus, according to the goals of its university museum, may be an integral part of this mission; works of art of high quality not only enhance the beauty of a campus for students, faculty, staff, and visitors, but they also convey the emotional power and spiritual values of art itself to every student, no matter his or her course of study or discipline and, thereby, for that student, enhance the notion of art with its multiple definitions and characteristics. Public works of art on campus, therefore, become a part of each student's education and his or her ability to formulate and articulate aesthetic standards.

Consequently, public works on a university campus should be of high quality and historical interest; they should challenge as well as delight, provoke as well as impress, or even invoke a sense of wonder at the extent of human creativity. Public art is most effective when it stimulates further inquiry and widens knowledge.

Equally important, such works should be installed so that they themselves are safe from abuse or vandalism, such that they can be easily maintained, and so that they do not pose a danger to others. Such works should be appropriate to the site and to the campus as a whole. Labels, tours, or programs should give purpose to the public display of the work and accurately set forth its historical context.

The director of the university museum or a comparable arts administrator should be in a leadership position in any such public art or art on campus program. At some universities, the museum's director may have responsibility for overseeing such programs, and should any such program predate the existence of the museum or should a tradition of collecting already be in place by other units on campus, the director may also assume responsibility for such objects as well.

No matter the extent of participation by its director, should the museum be represented in such projects, they must be consistent with the museum's educational mission and must conform to the standards set forth in *Professional Practices in Art Museums*. In such public art projects, although the museum's expertise is essential, it should not be the responsibility of the university museum to provide funding, but the university may provide a line item in its budget for such programmatic costs as insurance, conservation, transportation, interpretation, or other associated expenses. It must be the prerogative of the museum to set boundaries or to demarcate its own public art program from that of the university at large or any other unit on campus.

Other considerations for the museum involved in a public art program for its parent institution are the degree of integration of its obligations with those of other university or state agencies, including the state arts council; and collaboration with campus architects, building departments, or buildings and grounds units, and property control or other departments on campus that the museum may consult for guidance, assistance, or resources in the development, implementation or stewardship of public art programs. The key professionals in such programs, however, should be the director and curators of the university's art museum or comparable arts professionals. It is they who have the experience necessary to provide leadership, particularly on any advisory committees, for any such public art programs. Art

professionals should be involved directly in the selection and siting of such public art as well as in the objects' installation, care, interpretation, and stewardship because they have the expertise crucial to the success of such programs.

Public art on campus programs may result from state percentage programs from public art or by outright purchase, commission, competition, gift, or loan.

While it is not the intention here to write the specifics of a policy on public arts programs, such policies and procedures typically include: a policy statement with the reasoning for the policy as well as who should be aware of the policy and any other related information; any history or special situations regarding the policy; definitions, including "works of art;"¹ identification of key people in the execution of such procedures as selection of the artist, site-identification, etc.; maintenance requirements; identification of funds and expenditures and what is ineligible for public art funds, if governed by state or local laws; provision for any related costs; methods of selection for the artist or work of art; and the composition of the public-art committee. Such a policy typically specifies the responsibilities of any and all of the following individuals and groups where applicable in the process: the university's board of regents; its president or provost; any capital oversight group or individual; the public art on campus committee; any artist selection panel; any planning office or facilities

¹ The Public Art on Campus Policy (no. 2.11.1, effective December 2002) of the University of Minnesota defines "works of art" as:

"Original and unique creations in visual media produced by or under the control of practitioners generally recognized by their peers and critics as professional artists, accessible to the public, including, but not limited, to:

- Two-dimensional media such as graphics, calligraphy-drawing, painting, photography, collage, and printmaking, including both portable and permanently installed work (such as murals)
- Three-dimensional, sculptural media including work in relief, in the round, assemblages, constructions, and landscape environments
- Crafts and folk arts in clay, fiber, textiles, glass, wood, metal, stone, masonry, mosaics, and plastic
- Building and landscape features such as grates, lights, floors, and seating in unique or limited editions produced under the control of an artist
- Electronic media and neon works such as film, video, photo projections, and computer-generated artworks [sic.] produced under the control of the artist"

management office such as campus architects, buildings and grounds, etc.; and any public art coordinator or curator. The policy's description of appropriate process or procedure usually includes topics devoted to: artists' criteria for eligibility; whether recruitment shall be direct or through competition and whether actual selection shall be through open competition, limited competition, direct selection, or invitational selection; appointment and composition of the artist selection panel; that panel's design review process; and public criteria for the final selection of the artist or the work or art through evaluation that may measure such characteristics as quality, originality, permanence, content,² appropriateness, campus relationships, budgetary issues, and proposed materials, durability, and methods of installation. Of paramount importance in such a policy is the definition of how and by whom the site is selected for such works of art.³ Provisions for deaccessioning are also addressed in the policy, especially in the case of degradable works or transitory installations as well as provision for restoration or conservation in case of vandalism or damage due to natural, unforeseen occurrences.

An appendix of applicable laws or related policies, such as the university's gift acceptance policy, may be attached. The public art on campus policy may also restate the university's general policy that it will accept only objects or works of art without restriction as to their use, placement, and disposition.

² Evaluation for content or subject matter may mean that the committee must consider whether the work is significant at the level of sophistication of its university audiences, and the degree to which it can be expected to influence public taste and understanding of public art for years to come. In the words of the University of Notre Dame's "Campus Sculpture Program:" "Therefore, all works should have significant, appropriate, and timely content, and should represent formal styles that are understood and recognized according to national and international (rather than parochial) standards."

³ Evaluation of the site may include such criteria as the visibility and public access to the site; interior and exterior traffic patterns at the site; existing architectural and natural features adjacent to the site; existing works of art or design elements in the vicinity; potential impact of the work of art on the environment and on other university departments, residents, students, and businesses; future development of the site; public safety; and maintenance and care of the work at that site.

III. The University Museum and Non-Museum-owned Art on Campus

The university museum's parent institution, its foundation, or other units on campus may acquire works of art on a regular, periodic, or occasional basis. For purposes herein, art on campus is defined as those works of art donated to or purchased by the university foundation, by the university or college itself through its administration or governing board, or by individual departments or units of the university. Involvement by the museum in these arrangements will vary from campus to campus, but at no time should the university museum be responsible for works non-accessioned into its collections without additional staff and financial resources to handle such obligations.

The university museum may offer advice on such acquisitions, and, in fact, should be consulted or given the chance for prior review, but deeds of gift are handled by the party receiving the donation. Most universities will have a department devoted to property control that may require notice of such acquisitions. Units that accept works of art should bear in mind the responsibilities and obligations that accompany ownership, including such questions as restoration and conservation, security, stewardship, and insurance. Because the museum has the expertise and experience in dealing with such works, it behooves the unit or department contemplating an acquisition to ask the museum to review the proffered gift or proposed purchase.

Art on campus programs may be formal or informal, extensive or limited. In any case the museum may be charged with responsibility for overseeing such collecting programs by other units without the concomitant right of decision in the accession or deaccession of such objects. In these cases, the museum's staff may act in an advisory capacity only for works on campus not accessioned into the collections of the museum. The museum is not responsible for funding conservation work, appraisals, or other work relating to art on campus; nor is it

responsible for insuring or providing storage space for works other than those in its collections or on loan to its collections. Storage or funding for storage is the responsibility of the department or unit accepting the work of art. While the museum's staff may make recommendations for appraisals or conservation work and assist departments with finding qualified appraisers, insurers, and conservators, it is the responsibility of the department or unit to provide funding for the completion of such work, as well as to coordinate the work performed (make contractual agreements with appraisers, insurers, or conservators, make the objects available for contracted services, coordinate payment and billing, etc.)

A university museum may have a registrar, curator, or other staff member dedicated to art on campus, and, in such a case, he or she would probably report to the museum's director. Ideally, the university would pay for this position through designation of a dedicated salary line.

Part of the responsibilities of the position would likely include the development of a database, given that the university's office of property control lists may be incomplete or non-responsive to the special character of works of art. One of the obligations of such a position may be the development of an art inventory reporting mechanism for use in recording each work in the database. The employee dedicated to art on campus may either inherit or may develop guidelines for accepting and maintaining works of art by non-museum units on campus, and those guidelines may be approved by the university's administrators, its foundation officers, even its board of regents, if necessary, and disseminated to every department or unit on campus. Under such guidelines, works of art may be tracked, even if transferred from one department to another, loaned to another location, or deaccessioned. Said art-on-campus employee must respond to such guidelines' provision for annual or biennial inventories, or any

other frequency of inventory control as required by the policy or guidelines or by university property control.

Guidelines for accepting and maintaining campus-wide works of art should include a general policy statement and an introduction to the policy itself. It will, of necessity, differentiate between the acquisition of works of art through gifts and through purchase.⁴ With appropriate caveats, it will establish guidelines for the valuation of works of art, for appraisals of works of art, and for requesting a transfer of copyright for a work of art. A responsible set of guidelines will include conservation procedures as well as strict criteria for deaccessioning, insurance, and accountability.⁵ Procedures for loans of works or transfer to the museum itself must be part of the guidelines, since the museum must not be the terminus for otherwise unwanted works or works of insufficient quality or that have been degraded by over-exposure or damaged, vandalized, etc. An effective set of guidelines provides forms as models for other units to develop or use in their acquisition and stewardship of works of art.

⁴ It is to be expected that the university's guidelines would mirror those of the museum in accepting gifts of works of art. Language in such guidelines may indicate that works of art should be considered for acceptance only if certain conditions are met: "A work of art will not ordinarily be accepted with the provision that it be kept permanently; a work of art will not ordinarily be accepted with the provision that it be exhibited permanently; and, a collection of works of art will not ordinarily be accepted with the provision that it be kept intact."

⁵ The university museum, even should it have on staff an employee dedicated to art on campus, should not be held accountable for works not under its direct stewardship. Therefore, each unit must assign a staff member the duty of reporting/confirming the condition and location, or changes of location, of all its works of art annually to university property control and to the art-on-campus employee at the museum, should there be one. That unit staff member shall have the duty of maintaining a file for each work of art. The files should contain reports and invoices from conservators; a copy of the Deed of Gift, the purchase order or sales receipt, copies of each annual inventory report, and any photographs that document the object's condition. This record will also serve as evidence of ownership should a loss by fire or theft occur. The responsibility for maintaining such files should be given to a long-term department staff member under the direct supervision of the unit head.