



## **Collections Care and Conservation Policy**

Victoria and Albert Museum, 2013

Version 1.0

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## **1 Purpose of Policy**

- 1.1 This Policy is part of the V&A's Collections Management Policy framework, which consists of:
- Collections Development Policy, 2010
  - Collections Information and Access Policy, 2013
  - Collections Care and Conservation Policy 2013

It operates alongside the following V&A Policies:

- Buildings Conservation Policy, 2013
  - Equality and Diversity Action Policy, 2013
  - Sustainability Policy, 2011
  - V&A – 10 Intellectual Property Principles, 2013
- 1.2 The purpose of the Collections Care and Conservation Policy is to ensure that the Museum fulfils its responsibility in relation to the care and conservation of the collections, in line with the Museum's Strategic Plan and in proportion to resources available.
- 1.3 The V&A is an Accredited Museum. The Accreditation Scheme is administered by Arts Council England (ACE) which sets nationally agreed standards for UK Museums.
- 1.4 In line with the Accreditation Scheme this policy details how the Museum will:
- Monitor the condition of the collections.
  - Manage and improve the preservation of the collections through good environmental conditions and building maintenance.
  - Maintain best practice in the care and conservation of the collections.
  - Increase access to the collections through the conservation process, scientific investigation, analysis and display.
- 1.5 The Museum's strategy for the physical security of the collections, and electronic safeguards for the Digital Asset Management Systems<sup>1</sup>, is set out in the V&A Security Strategy, 2012.
- 1.6 The Museum's strategy for the maintenance of the historic fabric of the building is set out in the V&A Buildings Conservation Management Strategy, 2013.

## **2. Policy Implementation**

- 2.1 The Museum's policies and procedures are informed by relevant legal and ethical frameworks, alongside appropriate national and international standards, as set out in Appendix 1.

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<sup>1</sup> The Museum's Digital Asset Management Systems, Index+ and Horizon, are used to record and manage collections information and associated digital assets.

- 2.2 Managers should ensure that the Collections Management Policy framework and supporting procedures/plans, as detailed below, are followed in the areas for which they are responsible.
- Business Continuity Plan
  - Buildings Conservation Management Strategy, 2013
  - Cataloguing and Digitisation Plan, 2013
  - Collections Care and Conservation Plan, 2013
  - Collections Care and Conservation Procedures
  - Collections Management Procedures Manual
  - Emergency Response Plan
  - Environmental Policy, 1991
  - Gallery Interpretation Strategy, 2012-2015
  - Guide to Intellectual Property and Rights Management, 2013
  - Integrated Pest Management Policy, 2005
  - Learning Department Strategy, 2012-2015
  - National Art Library Accessioning Procedures
  - National Art Library Cataloguing Manual
  - Research Plan, 2013
  - Security Strategy, 2012

### **3 Statement of Authority, V&A Mission Statement and Strategic Objectives**

#### **3.1 Statement of Authority**

3.1.1 The *National Heritage Act, 1983* established a Board of Trustees of the Victoria and Albert Museum. Under the Act the property in the items which form the Museum's collections was, (with certain exceptions), vested in the Board. As set out in Chapter 47 of the Act, Clause 2 (1), the Board shall:

- (a) care for, preserve and add to the items [objects] in their collections;
- (b) secure that the collection items are exhibited to the public;
- (c) secure that the collection items are available to persons seeking to inspect them in connection with study or research, and;
- (d) generally promote the public's enjoyment and understanding of art, craft and design, both by means of the Board's collections and by such other means as they consider appropriate.

Clause 2 (2) a: provide education, instruction and advice and carry out research,

Clause 2 (3): do such things as it may consider necessary or expedient:

- (a) for preserving, and increasing the utility of, their collections,
- (b) for securing the due administration of anything vested in or acquired by them.

3.1.2 The Board delegates the authority to the Director to take operational decisions and to implement the obligations laid down by the Act. The Director is answerable to Parliament as the Accounting Officer responsible for the proper expenditure of public money granted to the Museum.

### **3.2 V&A Mission Statement**

To be the world's leading museum of art and design. To enrich peoples' lives and inspire individuals and everyone in the creative industries, through the promotion of knowledge, understanding and enjoyment of the designed world.

### **3.3 Strategic Objectives**

We strive to make the V&A matter to more people and in that context we work to the following four strategic objectives:

- To provide all our visitors with the best quality experience and optimum access to our collections physically and digitally, and to inspire creativity in them all.
- To be acknowledged and respected internationally as the world's leading museum of art and design.
- To promote, support and contribute to the UK creative economy by leading the field in debate, inspiring designers and makers, commissioning excellent design and stimulating enjoyment and appreciation of art, design and performance.
- To operate with financial and organisational initiative and efficiency.

## **4 Care of Collections**

### **4.1 Principles**

4.1.1 The Policy aims to strike a balance between the long term preservation of the collections and the provision of access through the management of risk to the collections and management and training of staff.

4.1.2 The collections of the Museum are cared for and maintained in conditions intended to preserve and extend their physical integrity. The Museum has established minimum standards of physical care and regular schedules for maintenance of collections. Conservation and maintenance schedules reflect public access requirements, research and exhibition needs, funding and staff resources, and urgency of care.

### **4.2 Condition of the Collections**

The Directors of the Museum of Childhood and Theatre and Performance Collection and Keepers of the Collection Departments, in collaboration with conservation staff, will monitor collections and assess their condition and treatment. They recommend schedules for preventive and remedial conservation, reviewed by the Head of Conservation, who develops an overall conservation strategy and programme for its implementation.

## **5. Risk Management and Security**

- 5.1 All activities which involve the use of the collections, such as handling, transportation and display carry a potential risk to the longevity and condition of each collection item.
- 5.2 The Museum aims to manage and mitigate the risks to a level which is acceptable, balanced against the need to ensure the collections are accessible and interpretable.
- 5.3 Risk management includes providing staff with appropriate training, monitoring the conditions of the collections, ensuring that procedures are in place to record changes in their condition and to safeguard the collections in the event of disaster and emergencies.

## **6 Conservation**

### **6.1 Environment and Preventive Conservation**

- 6.1.1 The environmental conditions specified by the V&A comply with the PAS 198 Guidelines and national and international agreements or guidelines.
- 6.1.2 WCollection items should be housed in conditions as prescribed by the *V&A Environmental Policy, 1991*. Any movement of a collection item should result in its being placed in matching or improved environmental conditions.
- 6.1.3 All materials used in association or close proximity with the collections must be an appropriate standard to prevent damage or deterioration to them.
- 6.1.4 Collections will be displayed using a combination of natural and artificial light.
- 6.1.5 The V&A categorises its collections according to their sensitivity to light and light levels and dosages will be minimised to manage the rate of irreversible fade/change.
- 6.1.6 No unnecessary radiation (such as ultra-violet) other than visible light should fall on objects during normal display and storage.
- 6.1.7 The risk to collections from dust will be managed through good housekeeping, filtration of circulated air and display design.
- 6.1.8 The Museum accepts that there will be a level of pest presence across the estate; this will be managed through good housekeeping and in accordance with the *Integrated Pest Management Policy, 2005*. It will be the responsibility of the relevant Keeper to establish a regime for checking objects in the galleries and stores for which he or she has responsibility and to advise the Director of Conservation and Collections Management on immediate or potential environmental problems.

6.1.9 Collection items within the Museum will be protected from vibration or shock.

## **6.2 Interventive Conservation**

Interventive or remedial treatment is undertaken to stabilise the collections, to enhance intellectual access and accuracy and to improve their visual appearance. Treatments are intended to prolong and extend the useable lifetimes of the collections in accordance with the international ethical guidelines. Treatments will be agreed with the relevant curator taking into account the purpose for which the object is to be used.

## **7. Staff**

7.1 All collection items will be handled and moved by staff who are trained and competent to do so.

7.2 All collection item movements will be assessed to ensure that the correct arrangements and resources are present, so as to minimise the risk to the object and to staff.

7.3 The Conservation Department is responsible for the delivery of collection preservation and conservation in line with the programme agreed at points 4.2 and 6.2 above and contributes to the investigation, research, and display of the Museum's collections.

7.4 The Conservation Department will ensure that the skills and expertise of its staff or external conservation companies employed by the museum will be appropriate for the care of the collections held by the V&A.

## **8 Access to the Collections**

8.1 The Museum accepts that use of the collections in gallery displays, exhibitions, touring exhibitions and loans may result in some change in condition. Risk will be minimised through the use of specified standards for mounts, packing cases and through staff training and compliance with Government Indemnity Scheme Guidelines for Transport, July 2012.

8.2 The Museum will optimise the space and capacity of all collection item storage areas through the use of cost-effective systems to provide flexible, safe and easy access, and will aim to keep reference collections in a stable condition.

## **Appendix 1: Legal, Ethical and Standards Framework**

The Museum's Collections Management Policy framework is informed by legislation, ethical codes and appropriate sectoral standards.

### **A. Legislation applying to all Collections Management Policies**

- The National Heritage Act, 1983
- The Museums and Galleries Act, 1992 (as amended)
- The Public Records Acts, 1958, as amended 1967
- The Data Protection Act, 1998
- The Freedom of Information Act, 2000
- Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, UNESCO, 1970
- The Requirements of HM Customs & Revenue
- Copyright Act 1911 and 1956
- Copyright and Related Rights Regulations, 2003
- Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988
- Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act, 2003
- Disability Discrimination Act, 1995 (as amended)
- Equality Act, 2006
- Human Rights Act, 1998
- Race Relations Act, 1976
- Racial and Religious Hatred Act, 2006
- Sex Discrimination Act, 1975
- Health and Safety at Work Act, 1974
- Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999
- The Environmental Information Regulations, 2004
- COSHH: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health Regulations, 2002

### **B. Ethical codes applying to all Collections Management Policies**

- Code of Ethics for Museums, ICOM, 2006 (including the ICOM 'Red List')
- Code of Ethics for Museums, Museums Association, 2008
- Combating Illicit Trade: Due Diligence Guidelines for Museums, Libraries and Archives on collecting and borrowing Cultural Material, DCMS, 2005
- UK Export Licensing for Cultural Goods – Procedures and guidance for exporters of works of art and other culture goods, DCMS, 1997
- Statement of Principles issued by the National Museum Directors Conference on spoliation of works of art during the Holocaust and World War II period, 1998;

### **C. Sectoral standards applying to all Collections Management Policies**

- Spectrum: UK Museum Collections Management Standard



- PAS197:2009: Code of practice for cultural collections management, BSi and Collections Trust

## **D. Collections Information and Access Policy**

### **D.1 Documentation and Cataloguing Standards**

- Spectrum: UK Museum Collections Management Standard
- ISAD(g): General International Standard Archival Description, International Council on Archives, 2007
- Anglo-American Cataloguing Rules ('AACR', Joint Steering Committee, 2nd ed., 2002 revision): international library documentation standard. In process of supersession by Resource Description and Access ('RDA', 2010, revisions through 2013-)
- MARC ('machine-readable cataloguing') data standards (Library of Congress, 1999, revisions through 2013-)
- Art and Architecture Thesaurus, The J.Paul Getty Trust

### **D.2 Lending**

- Loans between National and Non-national Museums – New standard and practical guidelines, National Museum Directors' Conference, 2003
- Display Case supplement, UK Registrars' Group
- Standard Facilities Report, UK Registrars' Group
- Standard Facilities Report Security Supplement, UK Registrars' Group
- Government Indemnity Scheme Guidelines for Transport, July 2012

## **E. Collections Care and Conservation Policy**

- PAS 198:2012 Specification for managing environmental conditions for cultural collections
- Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Archives and Libraries, 2007
- Statement of Principles issued by the National Museum Directors Conference on environmental conditions for lending, 2010
- 'Bizot' Group Agreement: Achieving sustainability for galleries and museums, 2013
- PD 5454:2012 Guide for the storage and exhibition of archival materials.
- Codes of Ethics: ICOM-CC /ICON
- Institute of Conservation's (ICON) Conservation Register, 2013