



Australian Government

Department of Communications and the Arts

# Artbank Collection Plan 2021-23

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## Contents

Contents.....	2
Artbank Collection Plan .....	3
Purpose .....	3
Collection Significance .....	3
Collecting Budget.....	3
Criteria for Acquisition .....	3
Collecting Summary .....	4
Collecting Areas .....	5
Diversity.....	5
Regional diversity .....	6
Career stages .....	6
Markets.....	8



## Artbank Collection Plan

The Artbank Collection Plan presents the collecting strategy for Artbank in 2019-21. The Collection Plan is written in accordance with the criteria and procedures set out in the [Artbank Collection Acquisition Policy](#).

Artbank is an Australian Government initiative within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communication, Office of the Arts. Established in 1980, Artbank is an arts support program for Australian contemporary artists that encourages engagement with and appreciation of Australian contemporary art by the broader community. With a collection of over 10,000 artworks in a variety of artistic modes, media and styles, Artbank provides direct support to living Australian artists through the acquisition of their work and promotes the value of Australian contemporary art by making this work available through an art leasing scheme.

### Purpose

This plan will enable the Director and the curatorial team to recommend acquisitions based on an assessment of the current collection strengths, collection gaps, client service requirements and an understanding of the future direction of the Australian contemporary art market. This plan remains open to the exceptional opportunity that may arise, but may not be articulated in this strategy, and will be reviewed annually to ensure it continues to reflect Artbank's priorities.

### Collection Significance

The Artbank collection tells a unique story of Australian art. Established in 1980 with an initial endowment of 600 artworks from the National Gallery of Australia's Loan Collection, Artbank has grown into a significant collection that is unique in both its breadth and depth.

Artbank is one of the largest collections of contemporary Australian art in the world and includes some of the best examples of Indigenous and non-Indigenous artwork produced over the past four decades. With over 10,000 artworks across diverse mediums, the Artbank Collection reflects the diversity of artists practicing around Australia.

### Collecting Budget

Artbank's annual collecting budget is established as a percentage of Artbank's annual operational budget, which is tied to the annual rental income of the previous financial year. At the outset of the new financial year, departmental approval of the proposed budget is required prior to processing acquisitions.

### Criteria for Acquisition

The acquired artworks must represent a high standard of artistic achievement within contemporary Australian art. Each work should be recognised for its excellence and be an exemplary example of its kind and/or represent outstanding artistic achievement within the artist's practice. Artbank applies three eligibility criteria for the acquisition of artworks for the Artbank Collection as referenced in the [Artbank Collection Acquisition Policy](#).



## Australian Artist

The artwork is produced by a living Australian artist,

- A. To be classified as an Australian artist, the artist must be either born in Australia; an Australian citizen; in Australia as an approved temporary resident for a minimum of two years, and/or a permanent resident of Australia;
- B. The artist may be living in Australia or overseas as long as at least one of the above stated criteria are demonstrable; and
- C. Where the artwork is produced by an artist collective or collaboration, no less than fifty percent of the contributors must meet criterion A.

## Significance

The artwork has aesthetic, historic, cultural, social and/or national significance that relate to contemporary Australia. Each work should be recognised for its excellence and be an exemplary example of its kind and/or represent outstanding artistic achievement within the artist's practice.

## Suitability to Collection

The artworks must be appropriate for potential rental through the art leasing scheme, including:

- Being appropriate for display in public spaces; and
- Being in intrinsically sound condition and reasonably resistant to deterioration in the routine operations of Artbank including display, packing and transportation.

## Collecting Summary

As an artist support scheme, Artbank is committed to collecting art produced by living Australian artists. The artworks considered for acquisition are required to engage in some way with the context in which they are produced. This may manifest through medium, means of production and/or subject matter. Contemporary art has the capacity to tell stories; to educate; to criticise; to question; to create encounters and to inspire. Artbank supports new art and ideas that capture our times.

From its inception, Artbank has had a broad collecting mandate. As a government program, accessibility in all forms has been important to the primary objectives of Artbank as an artist support scheme and as a leasing scheme. The leasing scheme allows the broader community to have direct access to a diverse collection consisting of some of the best examples of Australian contemporary art. As an artist support scheme, Artbank is committed to reaching as broad a cross section of Australian artists as possible. Five primary markers of breadth have been established, which are taken into account when assessing works for acquisition: collecting areas; region; diversity; career stage and markets.

Artbank is also attentive to the realities of collection management, storage and handling of artwork, which needs to remain dynamic, efficient and manageable. These factors are taken into consideration when acquiring artwork.



## Collecting Areas

Artbank proudly collects across a wide cross-section of media in Australian contemporary art. The current primary collecting areas are:

- Painting
- Photography
- Sculpture
- Textile
- Print media
- Time based work
- Works on paper (including drawing)
- Ceramic
- Glass

The Artbank Collection is dominated by two-dimensional artworks, including painting, photography, works on paper and print as these media are well suited to current clients. Other media is also acquired by Artbank and regularly leased by clients including sculpture, textile, glass, ceramics and time-based media.

The high leasing rates of two-dimensional artworks confirm the relative security of Artbank's leasing income and assists in the support of acquiring more challenging media to ensure the collection remains representative of the diversity of Australian contemporary art.

Artbank continues to review new developments in contemporary art to consider how to strategically acquire in these areas such as Virtual Reality (VR), site-specific artworks, computational and algorithmic art, among others.

## Diversity

Artbank actively seeks to maintain and increase a diverse representation of artists through the acquisition of works by artists identifying across different groups, including:

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists
- Culturally and linguistically diverse artists
- LGBTQI+ artists
- Professional artists who identify as living and working with a disability

Artbank is also committed to consciously ensuring equal gender representation in the Collection. Currently, 40% of works in the Collection are by female artists and Artbank is working to address this disparity through new acquisitions.



## Regional diversity

As a national program, Artbank seeks to collect across all states and territories taking into account the population of each state and concentrations of professional artistic practitioners within these regions. We endeavour to have a good balance of urban, rural and remote representation.

An analysis of regional diversity from recent acquisitions and historical data has identified the following gaps to be targeted from 2021-2023.

- Non-indigenous Western Australian artists
- Non-indigenous South Australian artists
- Queensland artists
- Far North Queensland artists
- South East First Nations artists including NSW, VIC and TAS

## Career stages

Artbank acquires works by emerging, mid-career and established artists. Artbank has come to be recognised for the important role it plays in acquiring works by early career practitioners, offering support and validation at a critical stage in an artist's career.

We recognise the importance of collecting from all three stages of an artist's career and the differing collecting modes relevant to each stage.

### Established artists

This section recognises the importance of continuing to strategically collect works by established artists. Established artists are generally represented in larger institutional exhibitions and collections and have a significant profile. These proposals are to be made with research that assesses the importance of a work against the artists' practice, proven major track record in exhibiting and collecting, and in the context of their peers.

Works in this section may be targeted at addressing gaps in the Collection or pursuing an acquisition that reflects a major career development.

### Mid-career artists

This section recognises that a high proportion of Artbank's collecting occurs in the mid-career stage of an artist's career. This stage is characterised by a strong and continued record of representation in the small to medium sector. This stage is often precarious for artists and is a significant way for Artbank to realise its artist support scheme as well as acquire works by artists whose practice is well-developed and popular. Works in this section are likely to be acquired through commercial galleries, art fairs, institutional exhibitions and commissions.

### Emerging artists

This section enables Artbank to be responsive to new emerging artists, generally in their first 10 years of practice, including post-graduate and other early career practitioners who may be unrepresented, but present sophisticated or interesting practices. Acquisition of works from emerging practitioners is likely to occur through graduate exhibitions, ARI exhibitions and artist studio visits.





## Markets

Artbank recognises its responsibility to acquire work from a diverse cross-section of artists. Artists are represented by different sectors of the Australian art market. Through acquisition, Artbank helps support the sustainability of commercial galleries, art centres, artist run initiatives, unrepresented artists, art fairs, arts festivals and biennales.

A major initiative to increase visibility of unrepresented artists to Artbank curators is the national Roadshow, which tours all states and territories in Australia. Purchases directly from artists are also pursued through exhibitions at artist run initiatives and studio visits.

Artbank participates at a number of art fairs across Australia through acquisition. Art fairs support artists represented by both commercial galleries and art centres and provides an efficient means of viewing a number of artists in a short period.

