



Australian Government

Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications
Office for the Arts

Artbank Preservation Policy

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Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications

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Background

Artbank is an Australian Government initiative within the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications. 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 program.

Purpose

The Artbank Collection (the Collection) represents an important cultural asset for the Australian Government and the community. This policy outlines Artbank's approach to minimising deterioration and damage to works of art through preventative strategies, maintenance, storage and conservation of artworks in the collection, proportionate with their cultural significance and financial value. Artbank refers to and applies the principles articulated in the [International Council of Museums Code of Ethics for Museums](#).

The Collection, as a lending collection, is a widely exhibited and publically accessible holding of contemporary Australia art. This policy addresses the unique challenges to physical preservation posed by Artbank's operations, including the variety of locations where Collection artworks may be displayed.

Principles of museum best practice for building, equipment, materials and procedures are applied. Measures relating to security, access control, stocktake, along with a counter disaster management plan and an integrated pest management plan further ensure the preservation of the Collection.

Artbank Collection Management

Preventative Conservation

The preventative conservation methods applied to the Collection balance the protection of works of art in the Collection and making it publically accessible. Artbank adopts a number of practical protection measures to minimise damage and deterioration to artworks. These include:

- Ensuring the art storage areas adopt museum-standard practices for the storage and care of the Collection, including building, equipment, materials and procedures;
- Adopting museum-standard registration practices in the documentation, condition checking, handling, packing and object movement processes;
- Conservation grade framing using UV-protective glazing and archival materials;
- Structural display supports and mounts for the display of sculptures and three dimensional objects;
- Quality hanging fittings and fixtures on all artworks;
- Security fittings and fixtures installed as required;
- Ensuring only appropriately qualified and trained individuals handle Collection artworks;
- Educating staff in environmental hazards and the damaging effects of physical forces, light exposure, pests, incorrect temperature and incorrect relative humidity;
- Training staff in the use of Collection Management Systems technology;
- Implementing regular cleaning, maintenance and pest management practices;
- Isolating Collection artworks from building maintenance works as required;
- Appropriate packaging for individual works of art including travelling frames, stillages and crates.

Collection Maintenance Program

The Collection Maintenance Program is an organisational-wide practice, involving all staff. The Artbank Acquisition Policy outlines principles for curators to recommend acquisitions based on their suitability to withstand the challenges of an art leasing collection. Registration and collections staff prepare artworks for display, giving recommendations for conditions of display and storage, and facilitating the occasional conservation of artworks.

Artbank adopts a routine collection maintenance schedule to help reduce the likelihood of serious damage and deterioration to collection artworks. Collection maintenance strategies include:

- Monitoring the condition of artworks on an ongoing basis through risk management;
- Taking action to protect, stabilise or treat where appropriate, individual artworks identified as being damaged or at risk;
- Using appropriate and archival packaging to protect artworks;
- Maintaining cleanliness in storage areas and endeavouring to clean artworks on a systematic basis

- using appropriate methods;
- Adhering to an Integrated Pest Management Plan, food and drink policies, pest-sighting logs and regular scheduled pest inspections.

Collection Preservation Strategies

The Artbank preservation program includes:

- The development and application of the Preservation Policies, including acquisition, storage, counter disaster management planning, integrated pest management plan, staff and client education, to prolong the useful life of artworks by minimising harmful effects of deterioration;
- The physical treatment of artworks by conservation for artworks requiring special attention, by appropriately qualified and trained conservators;
- Recording of treatment and condition information in the Collection Management System;
- Backing up the Time-Based Media Collection, maintaining it on multiple servers in separate locations and regular inspection to ensure it can be accessed.

Conservation

Conservation treatments repairs or stabilisation are occasionally undertaken when artworks are at risk, damaged or deteriorated. All treatments are undertaken to a high standard using appropriate archival materials and by qualified and trained conservators. In accordance with conservation ethics, treatments are minimal in order to maintain the artwork's aesthetic and artistic integrity.

Digitisation of the Collection

Artbank has digitised the entire Collection, holding high-resolution digital records in its Collection Management System. This process is integral to the preservation of the Collection as it provides a visual record of the physical condition of artworks for monitoring ongoing deterioration or damage sustained. Artbank conducts a digital record of outgoing condition of artworks prior to dispatch to clients to provide a record of any deterioration or damage sustained while on lease.

Lending Conditions

The Collection is a publically accessible lending collection, where artworks are frequently displayed in non-museum conditions. Clients leasing artworks are subject to Artbank Conditions of Lease, outlined in the written lease agreement. This allows for facilities inspections when practical and individual risk management strategies.

- All lease arrangements are in writing. An Artbank Lease Agreement must be signed by the prospective client before any Collection item is released;

- Collection artworks will only be leased to clients whose display spaces have appropriate security and environmental conditions as assessed by Artbank registration, curatorial or client services staff;
- Evidence of insurance cover for any high value or significant works of art must be provided before they are released to the client;
- Only recognised specialist art carriers are used for transporting any Collection artworks, ensuring best practice standards in fine-art shipping locally, nationally and internationally;
- Only appropriately qualified and trained Artbank staff or selected contractors are used for the handling and installation of any Collection artworks;

Stocktake

Artbank undertakes an annual stocktake and a condition-report audit of artworks in the Collection, and reports annually to the Australian National Audit Office.

Counter Disaster Plan

Artbank maintains a Counter Disaster Management Plan, and all staff are trained in associated procedures approximately every two years. The plan allows Artbank to prevent, react to and recover from emergency situations that may have an adverse effect on the Collection.