

COLLECTION STORAGE INSTALLATION

Public art museums do not necessarily hold collections or acquire. The newly opened Tauranga Art Gallery holds a very minimal collection for instance and the City Gallery, Wellington is entirely non-acquisitive.

For public regional and municipal museums such as Whangarei Art Museum the collections are at the core of their existence and a touchstone for its curators and audience alike – its cultural memory.

The WAM collection comprises of around 300 paintings and objects but now also includes an archive collection, art publication collection, video and DVD collections of past exhibitions and other ephemera associated with artists or gifted with artworks. Collecting, processing and storing this cultural material require some fundamental steps:

- Art can be in all accepted two dimensional media, 3D i.e. sculpture and ceramics and moving image i.e. DVD and digital art. Sometimes it can comprise an entire installation of component parts. Sometimes it can range from the miniature to monolithic, i.e. public artworks.
- Art can be acquired from artists, exhibitions, art dealers, collections or specialist auction houses.
- Art can also be accepted by gift or bequest from individuals, trustees of estates, corporations or other public galleries etc.
- All art accepted into the collection **must** be assessed against the criteria outlined in the “Collections Management Policy” and its context to its existing collection.
- If the artworks fulfil one or more criteria of the collections policy it is then assessed for quality, provenance (its past history), legality of ownership, condition reported and assessed for any conservation, remedial treatment or framing required.
- If the artwork is being acquired directly then it is also assessed by budget criteria, and if necessary negotiations are entered into or sponsorship sought. If the artwork is accepted by gift or bequest a letter of agreement is prepared and a Deed of Gift exchanged between both parties.
- Once accepted the artwork is documented and listed on the digital register of collections for insurance. Any remedial treatment required immediately is carried out by professional conservators i.e. Auckland Art Gallery.
- The artwork is photographically recorded before finally being exhibited.
- The art work is finally given an accession number (a unique number which includes the artists number and year of accession) and entered into the museums Vernon Collections software.
- Once the entire collection is formally accessioned onto the Vernon system (a process which for many museums nationally can take several years) we hope to have the collection at WAM available on-line, connecting this valuable resource to Museums Aotearoa National Distributions Collection project, currently in progress and the Te Papa New Zealand museums On-Line Project.

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Collections are stored in dedicated, secure and fire proof areas.

Ideally all racks should be constructed of inert materials, i.e. chemical free. Climate control should be maintained at a constant 19 – 21 degrees Celsius throughout the year and relative humidity at 50 – 55RH. All artwork should be handled with gloves as human hands contain substances which can damage artwork with constant handling.