



INDIANAPOLIS MUSEUM OF ART AT NEWFIELDS DEACCESSION POLICY

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DEACCESSION OF WORKS OF ART

Deaccessioning is the formal removal of a work from a museum's permanent art collection. It is normally followed by disposition of the work by sale or exchange. Deaccessioning is an ongoing professional responsibility of the museum, undertaken for collection enhancement.

The Museum, for any one of the reasons described below, may find it necessary or desirable to amend its collections by deaccession.

POLICY

Objects considered for deaccession may include the following:

1. Objects that are not appropriate for the Museum's art collections, such as permanent, study, Lilly House or Miller House collections, or are not consistent with the goals of the Museum.
2. Objects that are determined to be below the level of quality necessary to advance the Museum's mission or possess little potential for research, scholarship or educational purposes.
3. Objects that have been forged or misrepresented. A forgery is defined as a work that was intentionally made or sold for the purpose of defrauding buyers, or that has been altered in any way toward the same end. For ethnographic art, this definition also includes objects not made or used in their traditional contexts. Forgeries do not include studio work, copies, imitations, and similar works made without deceitful intent and sold in good faith by a reputable dealer. Objects misrepresented by the seller include forgeries and objects with falsified provenance.
4. Duplicate and redundant objects. An example would be two prints of the same state. The Museum shall retain the superior example. Condition and source shall also be considered. Redundant works include objects that are either duplicates, or similar variants, such as slightly different states of the same print. They also include works closely related in subject and style by the same artist or school but varying in quality, condition, and interest. In such instances, the Museum shall retain the superior example.
5. Objects damaged or deteriorated beyond reasonable repair.
6. Items for which the Museum is not able to provide proper storage or care.
7. Objects in art historical areas or cultures in which the museum ceases to collect.

PROCEDURES

The Curator will determine whether an object may be considered for deaccessioning based on the guidelines provided herein. The Curator will present the deaccession proposal to the Director for approval prior to beginning the formal procedures. The following procedures will be followed.

1. Recommendation for Deaccession Form

The Curator will initiate a Recommendation for Deaccession Form for each item or group of related items (Appendix H). This full written justification includes an evaluation of the object's art historical significance and its position in the collection. The Curator will complete the sections that identify the item, discuss provenance, valuation, reasons for deaccessioning, and disposition.

2. Approval to proceed with deaccession

The Director must review the recommendation form and give approval to proceed with all deaccession candidates.

3. Review of Records

The Registrar will examine the object's records to determine whether the Museum has legal title and will review donor information with appropriate staff. If the proposed deaccession candidate was a gift, the Curator will examine its historical and donor files for any information about the gift and its donor that may influence the decision to deaccession.

4. Contact with donor, heirs, or living artist

In the case of unencumbered gifts the Curator will as a courtesy make reasonable efforts to contact donors, their immediate heirs, or executors, to inform them of the proposed deaccession, but such action shall not be construed as a request for permission to deaccession or as an attempt to return the object. Prior to contacting any donor the Director and the Development Department shall be consulted. If there is a legal question, the Museum's counsel will be contacted. If the object is by a living artist, the Museum will attempt to contact him or her.

A reasonable effort to contact a donor, whose gift occurred within twenty years of the deaccession date, may include but is not limited to an Internet search, review of obituary records at the courthouse, or telephone directory records at the local historical society. If a deaccessioned object was given to the Museum more than twenty years prior, one attempt to contact or locate the donor or their immediate heir is sufficient (e.g. Internet search.)

5. Outside Opinion

The Museum will seek a written opinion of the recommendation to deaccession from an outside expert for significant objects defined as works valued more than \$10,000. Evaluations based on photographs will not be accepted for the purposes of deaccession of a significant object. If the reason for deaccession is condition, a conservation report may accompany the Recommendation for Deaccession Form.

6. Appraisal

One or more outside appraisals for objects of significant value are recommended especially those that might be sold or traded.

7. Final Review by Director

The Director will review all proposed deaccessions prior to the Collections Committee presentation and will sign the deaccession form at this time.

8. Presentation to Collections Committee

The deaccession must be presented to the Collections Committee by the Curator. Once the Collections Committee confirms the deaccession, the Committee will recommend the deaccession to the Board of Governors in their report.

9. Approval by the Board of Governors

The Board of Governors must approve the deaccession by at least a two-thirds majority.

10. Disposal

Each deaccessioned object shall be disposed of in a means appropriate to the item. In many cases, this will be by public auction or consignment to or trade with a reputable dealer, but some objects may best be disposed of by transferring them to another institution or in cases of objects beyond reasonable repair, the Museum may wish to destroy them. Disposal will not take place in a way that creates a conflict of interest for the Museum.

As is applicable to all staff, trustees, and volunteers of the IMA, directly or indirectly purchasing a work of art that is being deaccessioned by the IMA is a violation of the Code of Ethics.

In the cases of stolen, forged, or misrepresented objects, the Curator and Director will determine their proper disposition. For purchases, the Museum may seek a refund, credit, or exchange from the dealer or auction house.

In general, the Curator in whose area the deaccession falls in association with the Director will recommend a means of disposal and supervise the disposal. The Registrar will implement the disposal and keep the Director and Curator informed.

11. Use of Proceeds

The funds received from the sale of works of art will be used to enhance the collection through the acquisition of works of art. Deaccession funds will be used to cover the purchase price of new works of art for the permanent collection and may also be used to pay for specific costs directly associated with such acquisitions after operating funds have been reviewed and/or exhausted. Such expenditures of deaccession funds may also be used on a case by case basis to cover the cost associated with the acquisitions and deaccessioning processes, including framing, mounting, photography, conservation, staffing, packing, transportation, evaluation, sales fees, and processing costs. Works of art purchased with deaccession funds will be publicly credited to the original donor(s) as follows, "Gift of [donor's original credit] by exchange" or "Through prior gift of [donor's original credit.]"

12. Documentation

The Registrar will document the deaccession in the permanent files, accession card files, and in the collection management database. A photograph must be on record prior to its disposal. The completed Recommendation for Deaccession Form (including the amount realized from sale) will become part of the object's permanent historical file. The list of deaccessions will be posted on the IMA website after approval by the Board of Governors and funds realized will be updated regularly. In addition, the IRS 990 form will also be accessible on the IMA website.