

Art Acquisitions Operational Guidelines

Communication Plan

Draft revised by Dan Jacobs – August 21, 2013

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Situation

Many groups on campus have through the years accepted gifts of artworks and/or purchased works of art without benefit of consistent standards for the acquisition, management and removal of art objects in the University of Denver Art Collections. The Board of Trustees approved an art collection and display policy in early 2010 to bring a strategic focus to the University Art Collection, emphasizing that collecting artworks should fulfill purposes such as teaching, research and contributing to historical or artistic significance. In late 2011, operational guidelines were developed to provide a framework for managing the University Art Collections. These guidelines need to be communicated to those in roles where they may be asked to decide whether to accept offers from outside groups and individuals of works of art.

Goal

Increase awareness among targeted internal audiences of the University Art Collections guidelines, such that these individuals see the guidelines as a help to them in considering offers of gifts of art objects. Increase overall understanding and support among internal audiences of the role the University Art Collection plays in its academic and campus improvement goals.

Objectives

1. Make the guidelines easily accessible on the DU website, and link to the guidelines document in all communications.
2. Create and distribute a brief announcement of the existence of the guidelines to target audiences such as University Advancement, advancement teams within schools, deans, administrative leaders, and other groups to be defined.
3. Propose a message from the chancellor to go to all faculty and staff that presents the University Art Collections guidelines as a way to ensure the ongoing significance and teaching value of the Art Collection. (This assumes that the majority of employees aren't aware that we have a rigorous, ongoing focus on our art collection.)

Key Messages

The University of Denver has benefited from the generosity of many people over the decades who have donated works of art to the University.

Starting as long ago as the late 1800s, the University has accumulated several thousand pieces of art.

The collection and display of works of art by the University is governed by a [policy](#) approved by the University's Board of Trustees in January 2010. The policy sets two categories for art holdings:

- Artworks of general interest, valued primarily as ornaments for the University's buildings and grounds
- Artworks deemed of sufficient artistic, scholarly or financial value to justify inclusion in the formal University Art Collections

Per the policy, the chancellor must approve decisions on works in the collection, and a University Art Collections Committee is responsible for developing and applying guidelines and procedures.

In 2011, the University began a comprehensive effort to develop consistent standards and processes for managing the large art collection it has built up over the years, and to be used in making decisions to acquire or remove art objects from the collection.

It is important to have such standards to uphold the value of the University Art Collections, and to be a good steward on behalf of those who make donations of art. Included in this effort was completion of a comprehensive, reliable inventory of artworks owned by the University, and either displayed or in storage.

We now have detailed operational **guidelines** [[link to document online?](#)] for the University of Denver Art Collections covering:

- Acquisitions (accessioning) of art objects
- Deaccessioning of objects in the collection
- Care and documentation of condition of objects
- Collection inventories and recordkeeping
- Insurance and valuations
- Loans (incoming and outgoing)

These guidelines provide a framework for day-to-day decisions regarding the University's art holdings.

Any member of the University community in a position to be offered bequests or gifts of art, as well as to make purchasing decisions for artworks, needs to be aware of and follow these guidelines.

Here are a few simple things to keep in mind:

- If University of Denver alumni, donors, and/or friends contact you about any gift of art objects, please defer acceptance until you check with the curator of the University Art Collections (Dan Jacobs, djacobs5@du.edu). The curator is the first point of contact and has the responsibility to work with the Art Collections Committee and report to the Chancellor on art acquisitions.
- Understand that per the University's policy and guidelines, works of art accepted into the University Art Collections must provide notable teaching or research opportunities, determined by a broad set of standards including museum quality, artistic value and historical or cultural significance.
- Be aware of these criteria for acquisitions:
 - Art objects must complement the existing collection or offer a substantially new and desirable field of study by the School of Art & Art History.
 - The University must be able to provide proper storage and care of the artwork.
 - There must be no doubt as to ownership of the piece.
 - No legal or ethical considerations exist that would make accession undesirable.
 - The curator of the University Art Collections and the Art Collections Committee must consider any conservation, repair, display and maintenance costs to determine whether or not the work is acceptable to the University.

The University Art Collections are managed by the curator in close collaboration with the School of Art and Art History faculty, whose expertise help to guide acquisitions that further the educational experience of our students.

The new Hampden Art Study Center (HASC), which opened in 2012, is the University's first facility designed for the storage, examination and preparation of artworks in an educational setting. It provides a secure climate-controlled space for access to and care of the University Art Collections.

The HASC was designed for the benefit of DU students, faculty members and classes. It is open by appointment both for individual research and class sessions. Visits to the space must relate to the use of the art collections for teaching or research. For information, contact the collections manager, Sabena Kull, at Sabena.Kull@du.edu.

Next steps

1. Dan Jacobs to review this plan (especially the key messages) and provide input and changes
2. Jan Kitta to draft memo to target groups/individuals based on the key messages (see objective No. 2 above)
3. Jan to also draft short note from the chancellor that would provide context for the University's art collection and the policy/guidelines
 - a. Purpose would be to increase awareness among faculty and staff members overall that we follow a rigorous process when acquiring and managing our art collection
 - b. Depending on how the message comes together, we could consider drafting a version for alumni
 - c. It would be fun to build upon the message by highlighting the various pieces of art on display around campus; we could start running a series in the DU Digest webpage (goes to faculty and staff members) that links to photos of artworks and describes their significance within our collection
 - d. Before proposing this idea to the chancellor, we'd need to start with Kevin Carroll to see if he supports making the proposal to the chancellor (we'd use the DU Digest to get the communication out, vs. a separate webCentral email)