

Essex Collection of Art from Latin America
COLLECTION MANAGEMENT POLICIES

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Acquisitions and Disposal Policy (see separate document)

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Aim of this document

The aim of this document is to make staff and the public aware of the professional standards by which ESCALA (from herein 'the Collection') works. In alphabetical order, the policies included relate to:

- Access and use
- Conservation
- Enquiries
- General Loans
- Research

An Acquisitions and Disposal Policy is published separately.

1.2 Current policies

The current policies included in this document relate to the Collection's Forward Plan 2010-2014 and, like the Forward Plan, were approved by University Steering Group in December 2010.

1.3 Review of policies

Policies will be reviewed at least every five years (but usually annually) by Collection staff in consultation with the ESCALA Advisory Board, the ESCALA Management Committee, ESCALA Acquisitions Committee and other groups, as appropriate.

1.4 Statement of Purpose

In full:

The Essex Collection of Art from Latin America exists to increase physical access in the UK to art from Latin America. It does this by building, preserving, interpreting and promoting a permanent collection of modern and contemporary art from Latin America of the highest quality to represent the region's rich diversity of visual arts from 1900 to the present. As a university museum, the collection is a focus for interdisciplinary research, teaching and learning, increasing knowledge and understanding of art from Latin America for the enrichment and enjoyment of academic and wider audiences, locally, nationally and internationally.

In brief:

The Essex Collection of Art from Latin America stimulates research, awareness and appreciation of art from Latin America.

2.0 Access and Use Policy

2.1 Introduction

The Collection makes its objects available through the following means:

2.1.1 Display and interpretation

At the University of Essex Colchester Campus in the Albert Sloman Library and in the grounds of Wivenhoe Park (during Library opening hours). Children under the age of 16 are not permitted in the Library.

Interpretation of objects in the Albert Sloman Library and in the grounds of Wivenhoe Park is developed with input from the University's Access Forum and following the recommendations in 'Gallery Text at the V&A: A 10 Point Guide' and 'Sheffield Galleries and Museums Trust Text Strategy' as well as from the course: 'All for Show' (Norwich, 2009).

2.1.2 Exhibition/loan

Objects from the Collection are loaned regularly to exhibitions at the Colchester Campus (normally at the Art Exchange gallery) and to University partner firstsite, the contemporary arts organisation in Colchester. The Collection will regularly show objects at firstsite:newsite, firstsite's new venue in Colchester town.

In addition, the Collection loans objects to venues, regionally (including Sainsbury Centre for Visual Arts), nationally (Tate) and internationally (Glyn Vivian Gallery, Swansea; Blanton Museum, Austin, Texas).

2.1.3 Online/Digital Access

The Collection is fully digitised in 2005 with an AHRC Resource Enhancement grant. The online catalogue is available at www.escala.org and includes images and texts, references to relevant books in the Albert Sloman Library and an indication of whether there is related material in the Archive (although there is not yet a catalogue of archival material).

The website that hosts the online catalogue was produced according to the University's access guidelines for the Web and includes information about the Collection's other activities (exhibitions, events etc.) and related research resources including lists of publications and PDFs of newsletters.

The website also includes contact information, visitor information and provides opportunities for feedback through an online feedback form.

The Collection plans to develop and enhance its digital resources in 2010-2011 in order to increase the amount of information it can share and improve the range of services it can offer. The improvements will reflect the broader functions of the Collection as a university museum, and increase the opportunity for audiences to access and learn from the Collection's resources.

The Collection plans to improve its use of digital media (e.g. e-bulletins, a Facebook page, Wikipedia page) in order to communicate its work more widely and effectively.

2.1.4 In storage

Objects in the Collection and in the Archive that are not on display are available for consultation by appointment. The Collection has access guidelines that are published on the website or are available by request.

2.1.5 Publications

The Collection produces a range of publications in relation to the objects in its care for the website (research texts online), exhibitions (catalogues, leaflets), books and encyclopaedia (Public Catalogue Foundation). These are available for consultation in the Archive, through the Albert Sloman Library, the website and by contacting the Collection.

2.1.6 Learning and outreach

The Collection makes objects and information available through learning activity, both formal and informal, for a wide range of audiences. The Collection works individually and with partners, including the University of Essex Arts Office and Widening Participation team, firstsite contemporary arts organisation and Tate, as well as Colchester and Ipswich Museum Service and networks including Colchester Learning Network, Essex Heritage Group.

By special arrangement with the Department of Art History and Theory, objects are used in a classroom setting, *in situ* (on display) and in the stores by the Department of Art History and Theory for specialised undergraduate and postgraduate courses in Latin American Art and Architecture and postgraduate courses in Curating Latin American Art and Gallery Studies. The Collection works with staff and students of the MA Curating Latin American Art to develop their final projects.

The Collection works formally (e.g. temporary exhibitions such as UECLAAcross, joint symposia) with other departments and centres, especially Human Rights, Interdisciplinary Studies in the Humanities, Language and Linguistics, Latin American and Caribbean Studies and Literature, Film and Theatre Studies when desirable and possible; and informally by encouraging staff and students to engage with the Collection's permanent display and temporary exhibitions.

Objects and information are used in schools sessions with the University's Widening Participation team and with the Art Education Coordinator in the University's Arts Office.

Occasionally handling objects are taken to schools (so far, local primary schools).

Other learning activity includes talks, symposia (organised individually and with academic departments at and beyond the University), family events (such as festivals) and film.

The Collection works with paid interns (Frontrunners) and volunteers to improve its learning services.

3.0 Conservation Policy

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of the Collection's Conservation Policy is to ensure that future access and display of the works are not compromised by adverse conditions, handling, environment and negligent documentation through both active and preventative conservation.

3.2 Active conservation is the treatment of objects in order to preserve them for future use. As the Collection does not employ a conservator to carry out active conservation, it uses the Renaissance Regional Conservation Officer to help assess and carry out any treatments. Occasionally the Collection will work with other conservators, depending on specialised expertise required.

3.3 The Collection follows the Benchmarks in Collection Care's Best practice for the active conservation of objects and will ensure that the Regional Conservation Officer does the same.

3.4 The annual inventory and condition audit flags the need for any active conservation. The Collection then prioritises the treatment of those objects.

3.5 The Regional Conservation Officer will only use the techniques which are best suited for the treatment. The Collection, along with the Regional Conservation Officer, will document all stages of the treatment through photographs and notes, which will then be inputted into the Collection's Content Management System.

3.6 Preventative conservation is the careful consideration of the environment around the object, including temperature, humidity, packaging and safe handling.

3.7 The Collection trains its staff and volunteers in the various risks that can affect objects so that they are aware at all times.

3.8 The Collection actively monitors and records the environment in which the objects are stored and displayed.

3.9 The Collection aims to provide conservation standard packaging for objects in storage. As part of the annual inventory and condition audit, the packaging of objects is assessed and a list of repackaging priorities is compiled.

3.10 Conservation priorities:

- a. Objects needing immediate treatment
- b. Objects to be displayed

3.11 The Collection stresses preventative conservation to ensure the longevity of the Collection but will use active conservation when necessary.

4.0 Enquiries Policy

- 4.1 The Collection will aim to respond to all enquiries within 20 working days.
- 4.2 The Collection welcomes enquiries by post, email, telephone and fax, but an 'in person' enquiry must be arranged in advance.
- 4.3 The Collection will answer any enquiry about its art, artists or archive, but will not value or identify external objects.
- 4.4 Collection staff will forward the enquiry to the most appropriate person on the team or refer it to others as appropriate, notifying the enquirer that it has done so.
- 4.5 Collection staff will normally spend a maximum of one hour dealing with any enquiry but will always suggest further or alternative sources of information.
- 4.6 There will be no charge for the Collection's basic enquiry service outline above.
- 4.7 The Collection will seek constantly to improve its ability to provide information about the objects in its care while recognising that this will always be constrained by available resources. Future plans include developing a broader information database of maximum benefit to the broadest range and number of enquiries in addition to more specialised information.
- 4.8 Digital images of the objects in the Collection are available online for research and publication purposes.
- 4.9 The Collection can provide photographs in a variety of formats and media (digital images, copy slides and transparencies etc.). Production and copy work will normally be carried out by commercial photographers working to the Collection's orders. Charges for work of this kind will reflect the commercial cost to the Collection plus an appropriate handling/facility fee. All enquirers will be given an estimate of cost before any work is initiated.
- 4.10 When photographs from the Collection are to be published or used in film, video or television productions, the Collection reserves the right to charge reproduction fees where this is deemed appropriate. A written application will be requested in each case before photographic reproduction rights can be agreed, and the completed form will be expected to give full details of the proposed use(s).
- 4.11 Hand-held photography and filming of the museum interiors and displays will be permitted without authorisation provided that it is for personal, non-commercial purposes only. Formal, written permission must be requested from the Executive Director for all photography and filming with a tripod or any other special equipment, and where there is an intention of using the results for anything other than personal use. This restriction applies to both educational and commercial use, for which written authorisation must be obtained in advance.
- 4.12 An appropriate facility fee may be charged for any specially arranged filming or photographic sessions inside any of the museum premises. Photographers will be expected to observe any special conditions imposed by the Collection for insurance purposes, health and safety reasons, or the protection of museum collections and visitors.

5.0 General Loans Policy

5.1 Introduction

The Collection adheres to the Arts Council Accreditation Scheme Guidelines as they apply to loans.

5.2 The Collection will only accept loans from person/persons that possess the legal authority to make a loan.

5.3 Adequate records will be maintained to document properly the details of all loans.

5.4 There are three kinds of loan identified as follows:

- a. long term loan to the Collection
- b. short term loan to the Collection
- c. short term loan from the Collection

5.5 The Collection has a general presumption against accepting long term loans. If at all possible the lender should be encouraged to donate the item in question. It is recognized that the term 'permanent loan' has no legal meaning.

5.6 Items accepted for long term loan by the Collection must be for an agreed period of no more than 5 years. At the end of the loan period the agreement will be reviewed and if necessary a new loan formally agreed.

5.7 Artworks that fall outside of the collecting policy will not normally be accepted for long-term loan.

5.8 The Collection will give careful consideration to any request to lend materials from its collections for temporary displays elsewhere. All such requests should be made in writing to the Executive Director with full details of the proposal. Any potential borrower will be expected to demonstrate that appropriate transport, security, conservation care and display conditions can be met.

5.9 The Collection will only lend an accessioned item if that item has been properly insured or an indemnity undertaking has been given. This must be 'nail to nail' insurance covering each item from the moment it leaves the Collection to its return including periods in transit.

5.10 The Collection will only lend an accessioned item if the responsible officer is satisfied that the use of the loan is suitable and proper.

5.11 The Collection will only loan items after a suitable condition check has been performed and it is agreed that loaning will not harm the work.

5.12 The Collection will normally expect all costs associated with an outgoing loan to be met by the borrowing museum or organization concerned.

5.13 The Collection will normally charge a small fee to cover the cost of administering the loan.

6.0 Research Policy

- 6.1 The Collection will endeavour to meet any reasonable request for assistance from outside researchers, through providing access to information, records and collections for study purposes.
- 6.2 The Collection will facilitate such work by outside researchers but will not normally undertake it on their behalf. This applies whether the research is to be undertaken for purely educational purposes (such as a project or thesis) or for business purposes (for any outside organisation). The only exceptions would be where there is a beneficial advantage to the Collection in making special arrangements. Research in this context may be defined as any work above and beyond the one hour maximum time limit suggested for the enquiry service.
- 6.3 The Museums Association's National Strategy for Museums, published in 1994, observed that "research and scholarship are at the heart of the museum operation" and recommended that "museum staff should be encouraged and enabled to undertake research on the collections, the results of which should be published within an appropriate timescale".
- 6.4 Whilst this may be a desirable objective, in practice research in most museums is often given a low priority because there are always pressures on staff to carry out other duties which have a more direct service impact.
- 6.5 The Collection would wish to support research and scholarship by staff in their field of expertise, but accepting that higher priorities will inevitably exist would expect any project of this nature to be clearly defined and time limited. Research and scholarship carried out in museum time must be linked to a specified outcome such as an exhibition, display or publication which is in itself an agreed work plan priority. This will ensure that the results of the research have a clear benefit which justifies time spent on it.
- 6.6 The Collection would also wish to encourage staff to undertake research relating to the collections which falls outside their own work plan priorities, but to do so in their own time and having notified the individual's line manager. However, the Collection's research priorities must take precedence over the private research projects of staff.
- 6.7 The Collection would expect to be acknowledged in any publication, film or recording relating to its objects and work.
- 6.8 Contractual arrangements including fees, royalties and copyright on any publication, film or recording resulting from research carried out by a member of staff that relates to the Collection must be authorised in advance by the Executive Director.
- 6.9 The Collection will maintain regular liaison with outside organisations with whom mutually beneficial joint research projects might be developed and would seek to encourage such initiatives.
- 6.10 As part of the Access Policy, the Collection aims to work with outside researchers by making the objects and archive available through appointments.