



# ACQUISITION POLICY & TARGETS 2016-2020



Each year AGWA adds significantly to the State Art Collection of WA. This guide gives the background, rationale and strategy that inform the acquisitions choices that will be made in the period up to the 125th anniversary of the Art Gallery in 2020.

## INTRODUCTION

The Art Gallery of Western Australia (AGWA) acknowledges the Whadjuk people of the Noongar Nation – the traditional owners of the land on which the Gallery is located. We equally acknowledge the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists and communities we work with, and from whom we also acquire works of art, in Western Australia and nationally. To this end we support Indigenous artists to represent the many voices, aspirations and lived experiences of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

## CONTEXT

Since its establishment in 1895, the Gallery's central function has been the development, care and display of the State's Art Collection.

Reflecting Western Australia's history, place and culture, the Collection houses over 17,000 works of art mostly from 1800 onwards: with few exceptions, it is a Collection of modern and contemporary art and design that incorporates Indigenous and non-Indigenous material from Western Australia, Australia and the rest of the world.

Providing permanent artistic touchstones for Western Australians and our visitors, its growth and refinement ensures its ongoing relevance and status as the most important public collection of art in the State.

Its unique character is the outcome of its combined holdings of Western Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous art and design in all media from pre-settlement onwards; fine holdings of Australian material from colonial to the contemporary; major clusters of British modern material; and iconic instances of global contemporary art and design.

## Three target areas: Western Australian, Australian and Global

The Gallery has identified three broad target areas: Western Australian, Australian and Global with varying degrees of emphasis and need. They are not considered absolute distinctions - for example Aboriginal regions cross borders imposed by non-Indigenous Australia, and artists are increasingly mobile, working in different states, and indeed different countries.

These broad areas are also broken down into four sub-sections that reflect specialised areas of our current curatorial focus.

- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (Western Australian and Australian),
- Historical,
- Contemporary
- Design

***Significantly in its next phase, the Gallery's acquisition targets will also support the exhibition program leading to the 40th anniversary of its main building in 2019 and the institution's 125th birthday in 2020.***

## WESTERN AUSTRALIAN ART

We are proud to house the most important holdings of Western Australian Aboriginal, Historical and Contemporary art and design anywhere in the world. The cultivation of this rich and nuanced area of the Collection demonstrates our leadership in the visual culture of our region. It provides an in-depth representation of the ways in which artists have used their practices to work through and express connections to this place on practical, social, physical, perceptual and spiritual levels. They have done so, and continue to do so, in order to document a changing landscape, to engage with politics (here and elsewhere), to externalise internal states, to challenge what art itself might be, and to think through and critique global issues. In these diverse ways, their visions and abilities have both questioned and defined what it means to live and create here. The aim of this part of the Collection, therefore, is to enable the Gallery to tell the various stories - in detail and with works of high calibre - that compose the field of Western Australian art.

Recently, a number of artist-run initiatives have flourished in a now more diverse and less traditional small gallery environment. However, relative to interstate opportunities the WA public still has a reduced ability to encounter the cross-section of Indigenous and non-Indigenous arts here. The Gallery is committed to engaging with and collecting Western Australian artists in this sometimes transient yet innovative climate and will work to ensure a high visibility of WA artists in the Collection, so that the visual heritage of this place remains accessible for artists and viewers for years to come.

Our collecting in the Western Australian area will be informed by research into identifying gaps in the Collection, including developing even further those of significant artists already represented. This strategy will assist an aspect of our progress towards the 2020 celebrations of the 125 years of the Gallery as we are committed to showcasing the significant achievements of WA artists since our opening in 1895.

In the period from 2016 to 2020 the Western Australian area of the Collection will be developed by focussing on the following categories of production:

**Aboriginal:** In this area works by members of the Carrolup Art School and Noongar artists will be targeted in recognition of their unique place in the artistic development of this place. While rich holdings of Carrolup material reside elsewhere

in Western Australia, its presence in the Gallery is vital as it contributes to our ability to tell the full story of what Aboriginal art is and has been here. We will work to complement existing local collections to ensure that the State has the most significant holdings of this School and this region and that they are fully represented and exhibited by this State. An equal priority for Aboriginal art is the development of our holdings of works by Kimberley artists. An important platform for this collecting continues to be research conducted for the AGWA-initiated Desert River Sea: Kimberley Then and Now project, scheduled for completion in 2018. Mindful that generations of Aboriginal artists are all too quickly passing, the Gallery is committed to collecting these artists and addressing their legacy as well as actively focussing on the work of our contemporaries.

**Historical:** Our focus here is on increasing holdings of colonial material by artists engaged with depicting the growing colony and its surroundings. Another focus is on material produced between the start of the First World War and the late 1950s in order to further demonstrate the complex patterns of change from landscape practice to modernist visions. Both areas represent periods of significant vitality in the development of the visual arts in the State, most especially as WA artists took implicitly (and sometimes explicitly) ideological positions on how place should be articulated in relation to the traffic of international ideas and politics.

### Contemporary

The Gallery will concentrate on increasing holdings of the flourishing discipline of photography, a particular strength of the Collection since the 1970s. A focus will also be on capturing new developments in contemporary art locally. Recognising the importance of our art scene and the achievements of our best artists nationally and internationally, we will continue to introduce new artists into the Collection. This will be balanced by the inclusion of works of major achievement by established and senior artists already present in the Collection.

### Design

Here we will seek to expand existing strengths in late 19th- and early 20th-century material in the arts and crafts as a way of contextualising our holdings of the work of influential craftsperson and artist JWR Linton. Contemporary makers of furniture, jewellery, textiles, ceramics and glass will be

added to the Collection when they represent advances in individual practices and/or in the field. Additionally, in light of the changing nature of craft and design, we will also begin to explore the contributions of our local fashion designers, representing both young and established practitioners. This new area of collecting activity will allow us to respond to the changing face of design to the unique talents of our local designers and designer-makers.

## AUSTRALIAN ART

AGWA's representation of Australian art provides a detailed insight into the arts of this nation. It ranges from that of the country's first people - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders - to works by non-Indigenous artists from early settlement through to the modern and late modern periods, and on to the present day. Including material in a diverse array of media, these works portray the ways this nation has been experienced and imagined, its myths evoked, celebrated and, just as often, contested, and the various pathways to connection that have been explored by artists new to the place and those who have been here from the beginning.

In the period from 2016 to 2020 the Australian area of the Collection will be developed by focussing on the following categories of production:

**Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander:** In the area of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art we will focus on contemporary urban-based artists. Gaps in the holdings of Torres Strait Islander art will be filled by bringing in works in the mediums of printmaking and sculpture, and will include works by artists new to, and already in, the Collection. In addition, a major thematic focus will be on artists looking at the body to represent broader issues. This area will incorporate works from all regions across Australia that portray, symbolise or enhance the body, such as those that depict body markings, forms of adornment and works that represent the individual and collective self.

**Historical:** The strategic priority is historical painting and in particular, the target is to address a gap in the holding of works by female artists working in a modernist manner. The second priority is to acquire works that extend the breadth of the Collection by adding works from the colonial and Heidelberg periods, 1940s' expressionism and abstraction before 1970 across the mediums of painting, printmaking, drawing and sculpture.

## Contemporary

The Gallery will grow and consolidate our representation of significant and relevant artists to this Collection, balance this focus by ensuring we respond to new opportunities and developments. We will, therefore, actively seek to add works by artists unrepresented in the Collection as we also strive to capture major achievements of those already in the Collection. Thematically, we will target the work of artists dealing with socio-political issues, as will that by female artists of the 1990s who revised and re-energised abstract modernism. Another key area of focus will be the development of holdings of photographic artists from 2000 to the present, together with those working in video, film and video installation.

## Design

The historical component of the Design collection will be developed by extending holdings of Australian Arts and Crafts material in order to contextualise Western Australian practice, as well as our holdings of this material in the international area. Mid-century modern furniture, especially by designers not yet in the Collection, will also be a target. In the contemporary arena, the focus will be on design post-1990 across jewellery, ceramics, and furniture and on artists not yet represented in the Collection. Another key area of development will be the extension of the glass collection from 2000. As with the Western Australian field, the contemporary design focus will also expand to incorporate practice in fashion.

## GLOBAL ART

The Gallery has been collecting art and design produced outside Australia—since its inception in 1895. Early acquisitions reflected the importance the young colony placed on the role of art in educating the general public about aesthetic ideals. Collecting was naturally also influenced by the Gallery's colonial heritage, establishing a focus on English art that extended through to the 1980s. Despite this, early on there was also an international expansiveness to the Collection with groups of Japanese prints, Scandinavian craft and design and Italian glass introduced in significant number and quality.

Currently, the Global collection features some of the Gallery's most loved and most challenging works, many of which, such as our holdings of British Modern paintings, are internationally regarded and much sought after for loan for inclusion in major exhibitions. Alongside this are clusters of works by individual artists from various regions that reflect

significant developments in contemporary practice. These works of the highest calibre have inspired visitors and artists for generations and provide the platform for our Collection displays to contextualise local and national practice, particularly from the modern period.

In the period 2016-2020 the Gallery will develop holdings of British painting from the 1930s to the present to highlight the continuum of this globally strong area and to maintain the relevance of our current holdings; this will acknowledge the specificity of our history and the ways this shaped the collection. Accordingly we will commit resources across the five-year span to acquire a single, major work or single body of works of Global art (preferably historical).

We will also expand our capacity to more broadly represent contemporary global practice by beginning to build a collection that addresses the region encircling the Indian Ocean in South East Asia, India and Africa, and the increasingly culturally significant area of the Middle East. Our initial focus will be on the mediums of contemporary photography, video and conceptual practice, which are currently more modestly priced. In the first instance, we will direct our efforts to the contemporary work of the Middle East, an area in which we have the ability to show distinct national and regional leadership and which, as implied above, reflects shifting global cultures. This will be followed by a development of works from the Africa and Southeast Asian regions.

Complementing these objectives will be a continuation of Design focus. We will address the gap in our holdings of mid-20th century Italian glass with the aim of adding significant breadth to the holdings of historical glass, as well as adding necessary context to the contemporary glass collection. Other foci include early to mid-century British ceramics which will give context to Australian and Western Australian practitioners, and Secessionist glass and furniture. Contemporary Design works will be targeted that explicitly focus on innovative uses of materials and form, especially from practitioners operating between design and art, and a new look at aspects of contemporary fashion. A final strategy will be to source print material by modern American and European artists to provide context for our strengths in British modern painting.

## AGWA ACQUISITION GUIDELINES

Acquisitions to the Collection may be made by purchase, gift, partial gift or bequest.

Works of art can be purchased directly from dealers, artists and collectors, or can be purchased at auction.

The gift of a work of art can be made as a direct donation, as a donation through the Cultural Gifts Program, or as a bequest. The Cultural Gifts Program (CGP) is a Commonwealth Government initiative that is intended as an incentive to private collectors to donate works to public institutions. Gallery staff provide assistance to potential donors in organising valuations and liaising with the officers of the CGP.

Bequests to the Collection are managed through the AGWA Foundation.

The Gallery reserves the right to decline a proposed gift if the work does not further the collecting priorities set out in the Collection policy or the Collection's existing strengths.

When a work is deemed suitable for the Collection it is first recommended to the Director by the Curatorial staff at the Curatorial Acquisition meeting for assessment against policy and Collection requirements. It is subsequently presented to the Acquisitions Committee meeting. After approval by the Acquisitions Committee and the Director (who chairs both internal Acquisitions meetings), acquisition papers signed by the proposing Curator and the Director are presented to the Gallery Board for approval for works above a value of \$10,000. The Director has delegation to acquire works for a financial value up to \$10,000, which are notified to the Board. The acquisition papers outline the reasons why the proposed work is desirable for the Collection explaining the work's historical importance, its relation to other works by the same artist or related artists already in the Collection, its material condition, its display requirements and a comparative assessment of its financial value. The Board meets three times a year to consider acquisitions in February, June and October.

## Managing conflicts of interest

Gallery staff are required to declare perceived or actual conflicts of interests at the relevant acquisition meeting. This may necessitate the staff member leaving the meeting whilst the matter is addressed. Staff adhere to conduct guidelines noted under the State Government's Department of Culture and the Arts: <http://www.dca.wa.gov.au/About-US/our-policies/>

## Provenance

Provenance refers to the history of ownership of a work of art. Works can only be acquired for the Collection when AGWA has verification that its legal title can be transferred by the vendor or donor and that the Gallery's actions are compliant with international and national conventions and/or legislation addressing the movement of cultural artifacts.

Due diligence and appropriate efforts in researching origin and exhaustive line of provenance will be exercised by AGWA for all works considered for acquisition, whether it is through purchase or gift.

The highest ethical standards will be applied at all times while considering works for acquisition, with special regard to acquisitions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art.

Works of art will not be acquired through purchase or accepted as gift when there is any knowledge or reason to believe that current ownership or provenance of the work is questionable, or that it was stolen, sold or made under duress any time during its history.

## Deaccession

AGWA subscribe to international standards for art museums also with regard to deaccessioning and disposing of works of art, such as those outlined in the Code of Ethics published by ICOM and Museums Australia.