



SIR JOHN
SOANE'S
MUSEUM
LONDON

13 LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS
LONDON WC2A 3BP

TELEPHONE: +44 (0) 20 7405 2107

EMAIL: admin@soane.org.uk www.soane.org

REG CHARITY NO: 313609

ACQUISITION AND DISPOSAL POLICY OF SIR JOHN SOANE'S MUSEUM

Policy last approved by the Board of Trustees of Sir John Soane's Museum 28 June 2010.
Minor amendment made to reflect ACE taking over administration of Accreditation, January 2013. **Policy next due for review by the Trustees: 2020**

1. Statement of purpose

Sir John Soane's Museum comprises his own collections and personal effects, acquired between the 1780s and his death in 1837. The Museum (13 Lincoln's Inn Fields) was his residence which he designed to house and display his collections. The 1833 founding Act of Parliament stipulates that the arrangements within the house be kept in perpetuity as they were at the time of his death. The aims and objectives of the Museum are published in the Trustees Annual Report.

2. Existing Collections

The collections include two celebrated series of Hogarth paintings (*A Rake's Progress* and *An Election*), 3 paintings by Canaletto, 3 by JMW Turner and the Egyptian sarcophagus of Seti I as well as an important collection of early 19th century English paintings and sculpture and approximately 30,000 architectural drawings.

A summary list of the holdings is as follows (we have fewer than five items on long-term loan to us):

Egyptian and Graeco-Egyptian antiquities: 38

Greek and Roman marbles including architectural and decorative fragments (candelabra, furniture, ornaments etc.), major frieze and relief fragments, Greek votive and funeral reliefs, sarcophagus fragments, cinerary urns, funerary vases and statuary (including fragments, figures, heads and busts): 413

Greek and Roman bronzes: 31

Greek and Roman terracottas, mosaics and miscellaneous: 47

Greek and Roman vases: 59

Gems (Egyptian scarabs; Greek & Roman provincial, Hellenistic, Etruscan, Roman, Early Christian, Medieval, Renaissance, Neo-Classical & miscellaneous gems): 323

Engraved seals: 202

Medieval objects (including architectural fragments, fragments of woodcarving, tiles, pottery, glass & miscellaneous items): 70

Italian and Northern Renaissance bronzes (figures & plaques): 24

Works by named English Sculptors:

Flaxman: 55

Other sculptors: 38

Sculpture based on antique or renaissance models (mostly in plaster): 24

Miscellaneous sculpture:

Stone, marble, alabaster, terracotta & Coade Stone: 39

Plaster (including stucco manufacturer's specimens): 58

Wax: 6

Architectural fragments:

Stone & marble: 44

Other materials: 32

Medals (Napoleonic, Soane & others): 166

Ceramics: 39 (this does not include Soane's domestic china)

Arms: 5

Jewellery: 2

Clocks, barometers & timepieces: 11

Natural objects, curiosities (i.e. fossils, mummified cats &c.): 30

Silver (not including cutlery), 10

16th- and 17th-century stained glass panels, 104

Plaster casts (from antique and renaissance buildings or works of art): 442

Oriental or South American objects:

Chinese ceramics (18th century), 42

Chinese export dinner service, 228

Blue and white tiles, Kangxi, 377

Miscellaneous oriental, 15

Peruvian Pottery: 12

Paintings and drawings (excluding architectural drawings):

Oil paintings 16th-19th centuries: 68

Watercolour, chalk, pencil etc.: 266

Miniatures: 4

Oriental (Volume of Indian miniatures: 17th & 18th century): 37

Architectural models:

Models of antique buildings (plaster & cork): 34

Soane models: Bank of England: 44

Other buildings: 84

Miscellaneous models (including full-size models of ornaments other than casts): 100

Architectural drawings and prints:

Bound Volumes of Italian drawings: 1430

Bound volumes of English drawings: 831

Bound volumes of drawings by Adam, Brettingham, Playfair, Rysbrack, Sandby, Reveley, Repton & others: 1,635

Soane drawings (37 Volumes): 2,523

Miscellaneous engravings in volumes: 168

Volumes of drawings from the Office of Robert and James Adam: 8,856

Drawings by Sir William Chambers: 789

Drawings by George Dance: 1,303

Sir John Soane's drawings (framed and loose sheets - including lecture diagrams):
8,044
Drawings by James Playfair: 286
Miscellaneous architectural drawings and prints: 931
Pennant's *London*, extra illustrated copy: 1,531

The Library (including illuminated and other manuscripts and early printed books as well as Soane's wide-ranging collection of early 19th century publications, more than half of which concern art, architecture, topography etc.): 7,783

In addition to this list the house contains furniture (approximately 325 items) and Soane's extensive archive of personal and business papers as well as an extensive building / collections archive (items such as sash fasteners too decayed to be retained in use; fabric samples from re-upholstering projects etc.).

For the avoidance of doubt, modern models or plaster casts made for exhibition or other purposes since 1990 and given to/retained by the Museum are not considered collection items and are given to/retained by the Museum on the basis that this may not be permanent and that they may be de-acquisitioned as long as this has been approved by the Director and the Deputy Director in consultation as necessary with the Exhibitions Curator. A record will be kept of all such de-acquisitions.

3. Criteria governing future acquisition/collecting policy

Acquisitions are rare and must be approved by the Trustees.

Acquisitions might include items associated with Soane's life, family and architectural practice, for example, portraits, letters, design drawings by Soane himself or his sons or office pupils, photographs of Soane's buildings or related buildings. Items acquired might also relate to Soane's museum and its historic interiors or to past Curators of the Museum, for example, furniture, lamps, photographs, portraits, drawings or archive material. The Museum might also collect photographs, design drawings, portraits etc. relating to the major holdings of architectural drawings in its collection and in particular to the work of Robert and James Adam and George Dance the Younger.

Future acquisitions may come from any time period or geographical area, providing they are related to Soane's life and work or his collections.

4. Period of time and/or geographical area to which collecting relates

In general when acquisitions are made they relate to the period 1753-1837, the lifetime of Sir John Soane. However, in exceptional circumstances an item may be acquired that relates to a work of art in the collection dating from another period or which relates to the history of the Museum i.e. the period from 1837 to the present day.

5. Limitations on collecting

The museum recognises its responsibility, in acquiring additions to its collections, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard. It will take into account limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, storage and care of collection arrangements.

6. Collecting policies of other museums

The museum will take account of the collecting policies of other museums and other organisations collecting in the same or related areas or subject fields. It will consult with these organisations where conflicts of interest may arise or to define areas of specialisation, in order to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of resources.

Specific reference is made to the following museum(s):

V&A

RIBA Drawings Collection

Other members of ICAM (International Confederation of Architectural Museums, a sub-group of ICOM) as required by the ICAM rules

7. Policy review procedure

The Acquisition and Disposal Policy will be published and reviewed from time to time, at least once every five years. The date when the policy is next due for review is noted above.

ACE (as administrators of the Accreditation Scheme) will be notified of any changes to the Acquisition and Disposal Policy, and the implications of any such changes for the future of existing collections.

8. Acquisitions not covered by this policy

Acquisitions outside the current stated policy will only be made in very exceptional circumstances and then only after proper consideration by the governing body of the Museum itself, having regard to the interests of other museums.

9. Acquisition procedures

a. The museum will exercise due diligence and make every effort not to acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any object or specimen unless the governing body or responsible officer is satisfied that the museum can acquire a valid title to the item in question.

b. In particular, the museum will not acquire any object or specimen unless it is satisfied that the object or specimen has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin (or any intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned) in violation of that country's laws. (For the purposes of this paragraph 'country of origin' includes the United Kingdom).

c. In accordance with the provisions of the UNESCO 1970 Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property, which the UK ratified with effect from November 1 2002, and the Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Act 2003, the museum will reject any items that have been illicitly traded. The governing body will be guided by the national guidance on the responsible acquisition of cultural property issued by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in 2005.

d. So far as biological and geological material is concerned, the museum will not acquire by any direct or indirect means any specimen that has been collected, sold or otherwise transferred in contravention of any national or international wildlife protection or natural history conservation law or treaty of the United Kingdom or any other country, except with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

e. The museum will not acquire archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) in any case where the governing body or responsible officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

In England, Northern Ireland and Wales the procedures include reporting finds to the landowner or occupier of the land and to the proper authorities in the case of possible treasure as defined by the Treasure Act 1996.

In Scotland, under the laws of *bona vacantia* including Treasure Trove, the Crown has title to all ownerless objects including antiquities. Scottish archaeological material cannot therefore be legally acquired by means other than by allocated to Sir John Soane's Museum by the Crown. Where the Crown chooses to forego its title to a portable antiquity, a Curator or toehr responsible person acting on behalf of Sir John Soane's Museum can establish that valid titles to the item in question has been acquired by ensuring that a certificate of 'No Claim' has been issued on behalf of the Crown.

f. Any exceptions to the above clauses 8a, 8b, 8c, or 8e will only be because the museum is either:

acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin; or

acquiring an item of minor importance that lacks secure ownership history but in the best judgment of experts in the field concerned has not been illicitly traded; or

acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin; or

in possession of reliable documentary evidence that the item was exported from its country of origin before 1970.

In these cases the museum will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority.

g. As the Museum holds or intends to acquire human remains of any period it will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005.

9. Spoliation

The museum will use '*Spoliation of Works of Art during the Holocaust and World War II period: Statement of Principles and Proposed Actions*', issued by the National Museum Directors' Conference in 1998, and report on them in accordance with the guidelines.

10. The Repatriation and Restitution of objects, and human remains

The museum's governing body, acting on the advice of the museum's professional staff, if any, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by DCMS in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. The museum will take such decisions on a case by case basis subject to its legal position and taking into account all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in 12a-12d, 12g and 12s below will be followed but the remaining procedures are not appropriate.

The disposal of human remains from museums in England, Northern Ireland and Wales will follow the procedures in the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums'.

11. Management of Archives

As the museum holds / intends to acquire archives, including photographs and printed ephemera, its governing body will be guided by the Code of Practice on Archives for Museums in the United Kingdom (3rd ed. 2002).

12. Disposal procedures

The 1833 Soane's Museum Act and the 1969 Soane Museum Order stipulate that nothing shall leave the collection. Disposals from Soane's original collections as bequeathed to the nation on his death in 1837 are therefore prohibited.

Disposals of items acquired since Soane's death are subject to the following rules:

Disposal preliminaries

a. The Trustees will ensure that the disposal process is carried out openly and with transparency.

b. By definition the museum has a long term purpose and holds collections in trust for society in relation to its stated objectives. The governing body therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons for disposal must be established before consideration is given to the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.

c. The Museum will confirm that it is legally free to dispose of any item and agreements on

disposal made with donors will be taken into account.

d. When disposal of a museum object is being considered the museum will establish if it was acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation. In such cases, any conditions attached to the original grant will be followed. This may include repayment of the original grant and a proportion of the proceeds if the item is disposed of by sale.

Motivation for disposal and method of disposal

e. When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlines in paragraphs 12g-12s will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale or exchange.

f. The Museum will not undertake disposal motivated principally by financial reasons.

The disposal decision-making process

g. Whether the disposal is motivated by curatorial or financial reasons, the decision to dispose of material from the collections will be taken by the governing body only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including the public benefit, the implications for the museum's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. External expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local and source communities and others served by the museum will also be sought.

Responsibility for disposal decision-making

h. A decision to dispose of a specimen or object, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections or for reasons of health and safety) will be the responsibility of the governing body of the museum acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the curator of the collection acting alone.

Use of proceeds of sale

i Any monies received by the museum governing body from the disposal of items will be applied for the benefit of the collections. This normally means the purchase of further acquisitions. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of collections in order to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the collections may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of items will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are intended to be used for the care of collections will be sought from MLA.

j. The proceeds of a sale will be ring-fenced so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standard.

Disposal by gift or sale

k. Once a decision to dispose of material in the collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it in the public domain, unless it is to be destroyed, it will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

l. If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museums to which it was offered directly as a gift or for sale, then the museums community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through an announcement in the Museums Association's Museums Journal and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

m. The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of specimens or objects involved and the basis on which the material will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from other Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

Disposal by exchange

n. The museum will not dispose of items by exchange.

Documenting disposal

Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and the items involved and proper arrangements for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the items concerned, including photographic records, where practicable in accordance with the SPECTRUM Procedure on de-accession and disposal, will be made.

For purposes of clarification it should be noted that modern/historic items acquired for exhibitions (frames, models, desks etc.) or for office/education use (including for the handling collection) are not part of Sir John Soane's original collection but may be subject to separate restrictions if they have been grant funded or given to the Museum.

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