

SOAS

Collections Development Policy

Name of Collection and Museum:

SOAS Collection, Brunei Gallery, SOAS

Name of governing body:

SOAS Collections, Galleries & Studios Operational Group, SCG&SOG

Date on which this policy was approved by governing body:

10 June 2019

Policy review procedure:

This policy will be published and reviewed, at least once every five years.

This policy replaces and updates The SOAS Collections Management Policy, 2013

Updated June 2021

Updated June 2022

Date at which this policy is due for review:

2024

This policy guides the future expansion and refinement of the Artwork & Object Collections owned by SOAS, it outlines how the Collections development will occur in line with the professional standards for collections management and with SOAS' Ethical Framework.

Industry standard terms have been used throughout and a glossary can be found at the end of this document.

1

Relationship to other relevant policies/ plans of the organisation:

- 1.1** The Collection's Statement of Purpose is: to support the mission of SOAS University of London (otherwise known as The School of Oriental and African Studies).

The mission of the School is to be a leading centre of excellence in research and teaching relating to Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

The Collection exists to support this mission. SOAS will uphold this mission preserving, promoting and providing access to SOAS's objects and cultural collections.

To achieve this mission and statement of purpose, SOAS is committed to preserving, maintaining and enhancing its collections in order to make the best possible use of them not only for scholarly research and teaching, but also as a source of knowledge exchange between SOAS and the wider community at local, national and international levels.

- 1.2** The SOAS Collections, Galleries & Studios Operational Group (SCG&SOG) will ensure that both acquisition and disposal are carried out openly and with transparency.
- 1.3** SOAS has a long-term purpose and holds collections in trust for the benefit of the public in relation to its stated objectives. SCG&SOG therefore accepts the principle that sound curatorial reasons must be established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the Collection, or the disposal of any items in the Collection.
- 1.4** Acquisitions outside this policy will only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 1.5** SOAS recognises its responsibility, when acquiring additions to the Collection, to ensure that care of collections, documentation arrangements and use of collections will meet the requirements of the Accreditation Standard for Museums. This includes using Spectrum primary procedures for collections management. It will consider limitations on collecting imposed by such factors as staffing, resources, storage and care of collection arrangements.
- 1.7** In addition to being subject to this policy, acquisitions to the Collection are also subject to the SOAS Due Diligence Procedure for the acceptance of Philanthropic Gifts and SOAS will undertake due diligence strictly abiding by that procedure. In exceptional cases, disposal may be motivated principally by financial reasons. The method of disposal will therefore be by sale and the procedures outlined below will be followed. In cases where disposal is motivated by financial reasons, SCG&SOG will not undertake disposal unless it can be demonstrated that all the following exceptional circumstances are met in

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full:

- the disposal will significantly improve the long-term public benefit derived from the remaining collection
- the disposal will not be undertaken to generate short-term revenue (for example to meet a budget deficit)
- the disposal will be undertaken as a last resort after other sources of funding have been thoroughly explored
- extensive prior consultation with sector bodies has been undertaken
- the item under consideration lies outside SOAS's established core collection

2

History of the Collection

The Collection was developed informally over SOAS's history since its foundation in 1916 through donations, gifts and bequests from visiting dignitaries, SOAS staff, alumni and individuals with specific items relating to SOAS's subjects, area and regions of study. These objects have been offered sometimes with formal transfer of deeds or historically in some instances with limited documentation. The core collection was sufficiently well established for SOAS to undertake an audit of its holdings and for the Brunei Gallery Committee to take responsibility for its management and care in 2005, later to become the SOAS Collections Galleries & Studios Panel [SCG&SP], this was replaced in 2022 by the SOAS Collections Galleries & Studios Operational Group [SCG&SOG]. There was an inaugural exhibition of the collection Objects of Instruction in 2007 and a formalisation of the Collections care and management. The Collection's strengths lie in its modern and contemporary art, as well as ceramics.

3

An overview of current collections

The SOAS Collections are accessioned using the following format

E.g. LDSAC 2022.1.1

LDSAC = London SOAS Artwork Collection

2022 = Year recorded

1. region of origin of item (South Asia 1, Africa 2, Middle East 3, East Asia 4, Europe 5, Southeast Asia 6, SOAS related artworks 7)

1. number of objects in collection group

3.1 The Collection is defined in the Glossary section of this policy and its management is carried out by the Galleries & Exhibitions Office governed by this

policy.

3.2 The Archival Collection is defined in the Glossary section of this policy and its management is carried out by the Archives & Special Collections department of the SOAS Library and is governed by the SOAS 'Collection and Acquisitions Policy: For Archives and Special Collections'.

3.3 Specific areas in which SOAS has a collection of artworks and objects are: Africa, South Asia and Tibet, South East Asia, East Asia, the Middle East, Europe (European items related to the regions that SOAS covers) and SOAS related artworks (e.g. paintings of the School buildings, directors' portraits) and Oceania.

3.4 SOAS recognises that it has an obligation to care for its collections as part of its stewardship of these.

4

Themes and priorities for future collecting

4.1 Themes and priorities for future collecting include social history, fine and decorative art, popular culture, multimedia and anthropological material.

4.2 The SOAS artwork & object collection does not acquire ethnographic material.

4.3 Potential acquisitions will be assessed according to their items acquired for acquisition into the permanent and teaching collections need to fulfil a rationalisation (teaching and learning, through teaching at the school, or through display, to be used in other exhibitions and at SOAS) Acquisitions for the permanent Core and Teaching collections need to fulfil certain criteria, including their potential for use in object based learning, through teaching, handling, display or use in exhibitions.

4.4 There are no chronological boundaries for objects from Africa, South Asia and Tibet, South East Asia, East Asia, the Middle East and Oceania, or European material relating to these regions.

4.5 There is a strong bias towards acquiring items which originate from or are otherwise connected with the regions studied by SOAS. However, SOAS will not forbear to collect items from other areas which are representative of items of a type used throughout these regions, or which help to illuminate the general context of the history of these.

4.6 Items related will only be acquired if they illustrate a general point or the interchange between subject and region studied by SOAS.

4.7 The SOAS Artwork & Object Collection does not normally acquire material from the Americas and Oceania.

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4.8 Although objects with mechanical or electronic parts are acquired, they are not intended to chart the history of technology. It is therefore not essential for such objects to be in functioning order.

5

Themes and priorities for rationalisation and disposal

5.1 The majority of the Core Collection has been accessioned and rationalised. There will be a need to review and a rationalisation of items in the Teaching & Handling Collections, in particular the Archaeological Shards

5.2 SOAS recognises that the principles on which priorities for rationalisation and disposal are determined will be through a formal review process that identifies which collections are included and excluded from the review. The outcome of review and any subsequent rationalisation will not reduce the quality or significance of the collection and will result in a more useable, well managed collection.

The procedures used will meet professional standards. The process will be documented, open and transparent. There will be clear communication with key stakeholders about the outcomes and the process.

The themes and priorities of the rationalisation process are; to carry out an audit of the items in onsite store, displayed around the SOAS estate and in off-site store, identifying objects of significant historical importance, objects that will assist in the teaching and understanding of SOAS. Items that are identified as not having significant historical importance or unique in their construction will be moved to be used as part of the Handling & Teaching Collection will not be formally accessioned.

The reason this rationalisation is being undertaken is to establish that SOAS has the collections it requires to fulfil its short and long-term strategic objectives and identify those objects which are not relevant to be accessioned but may be useful for the Handling & Teaching Collection or disposal. This rationalisation needs to be undertaken to help understand which items will be formally accessioned in the Collection.

6

Legal and ethical framework for acquisition and disposal of items

SOAS recognises its responsibility to work in compliance with the Museums Association Code of Ethics for Museums which is informed by legislation, ethical codes and appropriate sectoral standards when considering acquisition and disposal.

7

Collecting policies of other museums

7.1 SOAS 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 specialism, to avoid unnecessary duplication and waste of

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resources. Specific reference is made to the following museum(s) and organisation(s):

Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
British Museum, London
British Library, London
Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge
Horniman Museum, London
Museum of East Asian Art, Bath
Oriental Museum, Durham
Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford
Petrie Museum of Egyptology, London
Victoria and Albert Museum, London

- 7.2** The Advancement Office will be advised of donations as required by the SOAS Due Diligence Procedure for the acceptance of Philanthropic Gifts. The Galleries & Exhibitions Office will liaise with the Advancement Office as appropriate.
- 7.3** Proposed gifts with unacceptable conditions attached to their acquisition will be declined.

8

Archival holdings

SOAS holds the Archival Collection which is managed by and is the responsibility of the SOAS Library.

9

Acquisition

The policy for agreeing acquisitions is:

SOAS will acquire objects and artworks which can be used to preserve and interpret the history, culture and wider understanding of regions studied by SOAS.

- 9.1** In acquiring objects and artworks, SOAS is influenced by its existing collections, but it must always be open to the possibility of acquiring new types of object resulting from technological and social developments.
- 9.2** SOAS may acquire objects and artworks by means of gift, bequest or exchange. It may also accept loans. Under the National Heritage Act 1983, SOAS “may acquire (whether by exchange or gift) any objects which in their opinion it is desirable to add to their collections”.
- 9.3** In cases of doubt the decision for or against the acceptance of any object or artwork which is offered will be made by SCG&SOG on advice from the Responsible Officer. In so deciding, consideration will be given to the value which the object or artwork could potentially offer to future generations. If under extraordinary circumstance an urgent decision is necessary, it may be made by the Chair of SCG&SOG in consultation with a minimum of 1/3rd of SCG&SOG members, including the Chair.

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- 9.4** Generally, SOAS will not actively seek to acquire duplicate objects or artworks. However, duplicates are considered of value and are actively collected where there is scope for them to be offered for temporary loan to other museums etc., or where the value of the items is enhanced by the holding or display of several such items together. In the case of printed ephemera which are potentially vulnerable duplicate copies will be collected where available.
- 9.5** So far as foreign archaeological antiquities (including excavated ceramics) are concerned, in addition to the safeguards, SOAS will not acquire objects in any case where the SCG&SOG or the Responsible Officer has reasonable cause to believe that the circumstances of their recovery involved the recent unscientific or intentional destruction or damage of ancient monuments or other known archaeological sites, or involved a failure to disclose the finds to the owner or occupier of the land, or the proper authorities.
- 9.6** SOAS will not accept every object or artwork which may be offered to it. The following practical considerations must be considered when deciding whether to add an object or artwork to the Collection:
- 9.7 Physical Condition**
If necessary conservation measures are not feasible, an object or artwork will not normally be acquired. Where the item is infested with pests or disease, unless it can be easily treated or the item is rare and the cost or difficulty of treating it is judged worthwhile.
- 9.8 Practical issues**
If suitable space is not available meaning SOAS cannot provide long term care for the object or artwork, where the proposed gift is encumbered by conditions considered unacceptable and if accepting the item would be prejudicial to the health and safety of SOAS staff or visitors, an object will not normally be acquired.
- 9.9 Resources**
The total cost of an object or artwork covering the purchase price, transport and handling charges, costs of conservation, documentation, curation, display and storage should be considered when assessing the acquisition of an object.
- 9.10 Copyright**
The copyright owner should be identified, wherever possible, and either copyright assigned to SOAS or a copyright licence obtained.
- 9.11 Provenance**
SOAS will not acquire or exhibit any stolen or illegally exported objects and artworks.
- SOAS will not acquire, whether by gift, bequest or exchange, any object or artwork unless it is satisfied that SOAS can obtain a valid title to the item in

question.

SOAS will adhere to the 1970 UNESCO Convention (on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property), rejecting items if there is any suspicion that, since 1970, they may have been stolen, illegally excavated or removed from a monument, site or wreck contrary to local law or otherwise acquired in or exported from their country of origin (including the UK), or any intermediate country, in violation of that country's laws or any national or international treaties, unless SOAS is able to obtain permission from authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin.

9.12 SOAS will not acquire any object or artwork unless it is satisfied that the object or artwork 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.)

9.13 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, SOAS will reject any items that have been illicitly traded.

9.14 SOAS 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 (as updated, amended or replaced).

10

Human remains

SOAS is not aware of any human remains forming part of the Collection nor does SOAS intend to acquire any human remains.

11

Biological and geological material

So far as biological and geological material is concerned, SOAS 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.

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Archaeological material

SOAS will not acquire archaeological material (including excavated ceramics) in any case where SCG&SOG or the Responsible Officer has any suspicion that the circumstances of their recovery involved a failure to follow the appropriate legal procedures.

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Exceptions

Any exceptions to the above paragraphs will only be because SOAS is:

- acting as an externally approved repository of last resort for material of local (UK) origin
- acting with the permission of authorities with the requisite jurisdiction in the country of origin

In these cases, SOAS will be open and transparent in the way it makes decisions and will act only with the express consent of an appropriate outside authority. SOAS will document when these exceptions occur.

14

Spoliation

SOAS will use the statement of principles 'Spoliation of Works of Art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War II period', issued for non-national museums in 1999 by the Museums and Galleries Commission with periodical reviews of items in the Collection.

15

The Repatriation and Restitution of objects and human remains

Though not aware of any the SCG&SOG, acting on the advice of SOAS's professional staff, may take a decision to return human remains (unless covered by the 'Guidance for the care of human remains in museums' issued by the Department for Culture Media and Sport in 2005), objects or specimens to a country or people of origin. SOAS will take such decisions on a case by case basis; within its legal position and considering all ethical implications and available guidance. This will mean that the procedures described in sub-paragraphs 16.1-16.5 (inclusive) will be followed but the remaining procedures contained in paragraph 16 are not appropriate. SOAS will refer to its Claims Consideration Policy (2021) when considering any claims for repatriation and restitution of cultural objects

16

Disposal procedures

16.1 All disposals will be undertaken with reference to the Spectrum primary procedures on disposal.

16.2 SCG&SOG will confirm that SOAS is legally free to dispose of an item.

Agreements on disposal made with donors will also be considered.

16.3 When disposal of an object or artwork is being considered, SOAS 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 object or artwork is disposed of by sale.

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- 16.4** When disposal is motivated by curatorial reasons the procedures outlined below will be followed and the method of disposal may be by gift, sale, and exchange or as a last resort destruction.
- 16.5** The decision to dispose of material from the Collection will be taken by the SCG&SOG only after full consideration of the reasons for disposal. Other factors including public benefit, the implications for SOAS's collections and collections held by museums and other organisations collecting the same material or in related fields will be considered. Expert advice will be obtained and the views of stakeholders such as donors, researchers, local communities and others served by SOAS will also be sought.
- 16.6** A decision to dispose of an object or artwork, 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 Collection or for reasons of health and safety), will be the responsibility of SCG&SOG acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff, if any, and not of the Responsible Officer acting alone.
- 16.7** Once a decision to dispose of any object or artwork in the Collection has been taken, priority will be given to retaining it within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.
- 16.8** If the material is not acquired by any Accredited Museum to which it was offered as a gift or for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material normally through a notice on the Museum Association's *Find an Object* web listing service, an announcement in the Museums Association's *Museums Journal* or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.9** The announcement relating to gift or sale will indicate the number and nature of objects or artworks involved, and the basis on which the objects or artworks will be transferred to another institution. Preference will be given to expressions of interest from Accredited Museums. A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the object or artwork to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, SOAS may consider disposing of the objects or artworks to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.
- 16.10** Any monies received by SOAS from the disposal of objects or artworks will be applied solely and directly for the benefit of the Collection. In exceptional cases, improvements relating to the care of the collection to meet or exceed Accreditation requirements relating to the risk of damage to and deterioration of the Collection may be justifiable. Any monies received in compensation for the damage, loss or destruction of objects or artworks will be applied in the same way. Advice on those cases where the monies are

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intended to be used for the care of the Collection will be sought from the Arts Council England.

- 16.11** The proceeds of a sale will be allocated so it can be demonstrated that they are spent in a manner compatible with the requirements of the Accreditation standards. Money must be restricted to the long-term sustainability, use and development of the Collection.
- 16.12** Full records will be kept of all decisions on disposals and proper arrangements made for the preservation and/or transfer, as appropriate, of the documentation relating to the objects or artworks concerned, including photographic records where practicable in accordance with Spectrum procedure on deaccession and disposal. These will be kept in the Collections Management System (accessioned objects) and in the Collections Folder on the SOAS shared drive (accessioned and unaccessioned objects)

Disposal by exchange

- 16.13** The nature of disposal by exchange means that SOAS will not necessarily be able to exchange objects or artworks with another Accredited Museum. The SCG&SOG will therefore ensure that issues relating to accountability and impartiality are carefully considered to avoid undue influence on its decision-making process.
- 16.14** In cases where the SCG&SOG wishes for sound curatorial reasons to exchange objects or artworks directly with Accredited or non-Accredited Museums, with other organisations or with individuals, the procedures in paragraphs 16.1-16.5 (inclusive) will apply.
- 16.15** If the exchange is proposed to be made with a specific Accredited Museum, other Accredited Museums which collect in the same or related areas will be directly notified of the proposal and their comments will be requested.
- 16.16** If the exchange is proposed with a non-Accredited Museum, with another type of organisation or with an individual, the museum will place a notice on the Museum Association's *Find an Object* web listing service, or make an announcement in the Museums Association's *Museums Journal* or in other specialist publications and websites (if appropriate).
- 16.17** Both the notification and announcement must provide information on the number and nature of the objects or artworks involved both in the Collection and those intended to be acquired in exchange. A period of at least two months must be allowed for comments to be received. At the end of this period, the SCG&SOG must consider the comments before a final decision on the exchange is made.

Disposal by destruction

- 16.18** If it is not possible to dispose of an object through transfer or sale, the SCG&SOG may decide to destroy it.
- 16.19** It is acceptable to destroy objects or artworks of low intrinsic significance

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(duplicate mass-produced articles or common specimens which lack significant provenance) where no alternative method of disposal can be found.

- 16.20** Destruction is also an acceptable method of disposal in cases where an object is in extremely poor condition, has high associated health and safety risks or is part of an approved destructive testing request identified in an organisation's research policy.
- 16.21** Where necessary, specialist advice will be sought to establish the appropriate method of destruction. Health and safety risk assessments will be carried out by trained staff where required.
- 16.22** The destruction of objects or artworks should be witnessed by an appropriate member of the Collection's workforce. In circumstances where this is not possible, e.g. the destruction of controlled substances, a police certificate should be obtained and kept in the relevant object history.

Accessioning means the process of formally recording the admission of a new object or group of objects into the Collection.

Accreditation means the scheme administered by Arts Council England (ACE) which assigns accredited status to museums and organisations with collections management that meets the standards set out in ACE's publication: The Accreditation Standard.

Accredited Museum means a museum that has met the Accreditation procedures set by the Arts Council England (ACE).

Archival Collection means all archives (including papers, maps, photographs, film, audio and video tapes) held by SOAS which are administered by the Archives & Special Collections department of the SOAS Library and which do not form part of the Collection.

Artworks means works on paper, paintings, sculpture, fine art photographs and occasionally contemporary works in various media.

Deaccessioning means the process of formally removing an object from the Collection.

Collection means all objects, artwork and artefacts that relate to Africa, Asia and the Middle East held by SOAS which are managed by the Galleries & Exhibitions Office and which do not form part of the Archives & Special Collections held by the SOAS Library.

Handling & Teaching Collection means objects and artworks intended for demonstration or handling which have not been accessioned and are not part of the Collection.

Museums Association Code of Ethics means the current code published by the Museums Association outlining the ethical principles for all museums in the UK which represents the general consensus of the sector on the ethical standards that are expected of all museums and those who work in and with them.

Object means any item not considered an artwork which forms part of SOAS's Collection: permanent (recorded in the accession register); support; temporary (e.g. a loan); or those used for educational handling.

Responsible Officer means the Head of Galleries & Exhibitions or the Collections Officer or relevant deputy of either.

Spectrum means the recognised UK museum industries collection management standard and is used by all Accredited Museums. All Accredited Museums must meet the Spectrum standard for its primary procedures.