

THE KIMBELL ART MUSEUM

POLICY STATEMENT

June 1, 1966

I. GENERAL AIMS.

A. Purpose.

The Kimbell Art Museum is dedicated to the education, increased enjoyment and cultural enrichment of the public through the display and interpretation of works of art. Our knowledge and understanding of the heritage of civilization is largely dependent upon the continued survival of the kinds of art objects contained in this museum.

It follows that the paramount duty of the Kimbell Art Museum is to display and interpret to present generations and preserve for future generations, the highest aspirations of past generations as represented in the works of art entrusted to its care.

B. Scope.

The Museum aims to form collections of the highest possible aesthetic quality, derived from any and all periods in man's history, and in any medium or style. The entire province of art is considered appropriate as the source of material for the collections.

C. Program.

Consistent with the educational, interpretive and recreational purposes of the Kimbell Art Museum, the constant display and interpretation of its permanent art collection, plus programs of changing exhibitions, scholarly lectures and symposia, conferences of visiting scholars, continuing research in art, publications, and the encouragement of the general public's understanding and interest in art shall be undertaken. The Museum, through its staff, shall participate in all activities considered to be in furtherance of the encouragement of art.

II. ACQUISITIONS.

A. Principles of Acquisitions.

The dominating principle involved in the acquisition process is that the stature of the Museum depends more upon the quality of the definitive objects it contains than on the historical completeness of its collections. A prospective addition to the collections, therefore, is to be judged from the standpoint of aesthetic quality and typicity, and whether it defines a master, period, school, style or area. The goal shall be definitive excellence, not size of collection.

B. Staff Function.

1. Since the primary function of the Museum is the acquisition, maintenance, display and interpretation of art at the highest level of aesthetic quality, the principle efforts and time of the professional staff are to be applied toward this end. No matter how qualified the staff, the Museum is not effectively working toward its goal if this is not the case.
2. The specialized training, experience, knowledge, research activities and travel of the professional staff is focused mainly on two corollary aspects of the Museum problem: a. an alert and up-to-date knowledge of the history of art and of the art market; b. an unceasing and intimate survey of the Museum's own collections to determine needs versus strengths.
3. When recommending objects for acquisition, the staff members rely not only upon their own research, but upon the advice, opinion and aid of the best available authorities in the specialized field concerned with the object.

C. Acquisitions Procedure.

1. Based on their findings, the staff, through the Director, recommends purchases to the Acquisitions Committee of the Board of Trustees for their approval. (See note 1.)
2. Since successful negotiation for the best in art often requires commitment and on-the-spot decisions that preclude time-consuming referral back to committees, the Trustees, upon special occasion (such as auctions), and after approved outline request from the Director, provides individual staff members from time to time with authority to spend acquisition funds up to specified limits, depending upon the occasion.
3. There is no way of predicting when the most desirable objects will be discovered or made available. The most successful collecting is always to a large degree opportunistic. It follows that the Museum can have a successful acquisitions program only if there is a considerable capital fund available for this purpose. The maintenance of such a fund is an essential concomitant of this policy statement.

4. In the absence of emergencies, the Acquisition Committee will not approve specific acquisitions until:

- a. There is furnished to it such documentation as may be available relating to the artist, the origin of the object of art, the reasons for its value; and an evaluation by the staff, including available proof of authenticity.
- b. There is presented to it by the Director or his staff, the reasons for the acquisition recommendation by the staff, including why the object is definitive of the period, master, school, style or area it will define, why objects of art already owned by the Museum do not provide such definition and why, considering the acquisition budget, the specific object is superior to other possible or probable acquisitions.

In the event of on-the-spot acquisitions, the foregoing documentation and supporting reasons shall be furnished and presented to the Acquisition Committee by the Director or the staff at the first meeting of the Committee following the acquisition.

D. Gifts, Bequests, Loans and Advice.

1. The acceptance of gifts or bequests of objects is governed by the same high standards as those outlined for acquisition by purchase.
2. Gifts and bequests are accepted only if the Museum is left completely free, by acceptance, from any guarantees in perpetuity concerning the attribution, display, exchange or sale of such donations.
3. The staff shall supply individual consultations and advice to members of the public, only in situations where it is ascertained and agreed that such action will result in specific benefits to the Museum. For example, the staff may advise concerning the acquisition of a work of art by an individual who represents that he plans to present the object to the Museum at an agreed time and in an agreed way, but the staff shall not assist in the building of a collection merely in hopes that the collection, or part of it, will be willed or given to the Museum. The staff shall not make professional monetary appraisals of works of art in any case.
4. Long term loans (those not included in temporary special exhibitions) may be entertained, but with comparable standards to those which apply to donations and purchases.

III. FACILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTATION.

- A. The Museum building is a work of art itself, and it is designed, constructed and maintained according to those same concepts of high aesthetic standards that govern the collections which it houses. It is a creative contribution to the evolving history of the art of architecture, as well as being a functional instrument for the care, study and exhibition of the other arts.
- B. Since our knowledge and understanding of the heritage of civilization is largely dependent upon the continued survival of the kinds of art object collected by this Museum (I.A.), it follows that the paramount duty of the Museum is to preserve for future generations what has been entrusted to its care. Every other aspect of the Museum's program pays obedience to and, where necessary, gives way to this trust. A continuing security and conservation program, and the funds, space, facilities, staff and technical equipment to maintain it are provided.
- C. The Museum maintains a reference library. It is primarily a staff library so that the total program of the Museum may be carried out with economy and efficiency. It is not a lending library, and it is not for the general public's use, although qualified scholars, teachers, curators and students are welcome to use it at the discretion of the librarian and the director. The constant growth and increased efficiency of the library is a major concern of the Museum.
- D. In addition to the public galleries, the conservation facilities and the library, the following facilities are provided and maintained to implement the museum's total program: a special exhibition gallery, an auditorium, bookshop, administrative and curatorial offices, Trustees' board room and office, a room for members or "friends," adequate storage facilities, maintenance and preparatorial shops, study areas, photographic studio, automobile parking space for visitors, adequate dining and catering facilities for special occasions, and a greenhouse.
- E. Since a limited special exhibition program, which entails borrowing by the Kimbell Art Museum, is part of the Museum's function, it is recognized that reciprocity in lending to other institutions is a necessity. Loans are stringently controlled, however, in view of the primary policy (I.C.) which states that the constant display of the permanent art collection takes precedence over other aspects of public program.

Note 1 (See II.C.1.) The Board of Trustees referred to in this Policy Statement is the Board of Directors of the Kimbell Art Foundation.