

# **Artbank Preservation Policy**

## **Background**

Artbank is an Australian Government initiative within the Department of Communications and the Arts. Established in 1980, Artbank is an arts support program for Australian contemporary artists that encourages engagement with and appreciation of Australian contemporary art by the broader community. With a collection of over 10,000 artworks in a variety of artistic modes, media and styles, Artbank provides direct support to living Australian artists through the acquisition of their work; and promotes the value of Australian contemporary art by making this work available through an art leasing program.

## **Purpose**

The Artbank Preservation Policy outlines the approach to maintenance, storage and conservation of works of art in the collection. To achieve this Artbank refers to and applies the principles articulated in the International Council of Museums code of ethics for museums.

Artbank, as a lending collection, is a widely exhibited, active and publically accessible holding of contemporary Australia art; this privileging of accessibility does apply additional pressure on both strategies of preventative conservation and collection conservation. We take into account these extra pressures and attempt to mitigate any loss that may occur in the ongoing realities of a lending collection.

Principles of best practice requirements of building, equipment, materials and procedures are applied including security, access control, stocktake, a counter disaster management plan and an integrated pest management plan provide further protective measures to ensure the preservation of the Artbank Collection.

## **Artbank's Preservation Policy**

Artbank has developed both informal and formal policies for best practice registration procedures, long-term preservation and protection of the Collection, particularly in relation to the appropriate display of artworks, both environmentally and from a security point of view.

Artbank's Preservation Policy needs to take account of:

- the aims and objectives of the Artbank scheme
- its collection and acquisitions policies
- its strategic and operational plans
- the needs of Artbank's clients
- the significance of the individual Collection items
- Artbank's place within the Australian Government's commitment to the preservation of the national moveable cultural heritage

In addition, because of Artbank's dispersed collection premises, all Artbank staff have an important role in ensuring the longevity of the collection, including and especially Consultants, who have a direct interfacing role with the Artbank's clients who take up the temporary duty of care for the artworks rented to them.

The Collection represents an important cultural asset for the Australian Government and the community. Artbank ensures the Collection's continued existence by providing suitable care and protection. This involves ensuring the integrity and security of the objects in the Collection by exhibiting, storing and caring for them in the best condition while at Artbank premises, and advising on best practice for exhibition, storage and maintenance conditions for those works when off-site at clients' premises.

### **Rental Arrangements**

- Artbank ensures that works are only rented to clients who can demonstrate an ability to provide satisfactory facility conditions that meet basic requirements of security, environmental control and adheres to the conditions of Artbank's rental agreement
- Works from the Collection may be rented to clients outside Artbank premises at the discretion of the Artbank Director
- All rental arrangements are in writing. An Artbank Agreement must be signed by the prospective client before any work is released
- Works from the Collection will only be rented to clients whose spaces have appropriate environmental conditions as assessed by Artbank Registration, Curatorial or Client Services staff
- Evidence of insurance cover must be provided before any work can be released on rental
- Only recognised specialist art carriers are used for transporting any Collection works, with Artbank reserving the right to nominate the carrier to clients
- Only recognised art installers are used for the installation of any Collection works, with Artbank reserving the right to nominate the installer to the client

### **Preventative Conservation**

In brief, practical protection measures for Collection works include:

#### **On site:**

- Ensuring requirements of building, equipment, materials and procedures for protection of the collection in storage
- Museum-standard registration practices for all individual objects, documenting materials physical dimensions and condition; hanging and display requirements; handling and storage requirements
- Appropriate registration methods for the recording of technological items within the collection, including management of future format transfers
- Conservation framing using UV-protective glazing and archival materials (sensitive media, works on paper and photography)
- Conservation framing including structural display supports (paintings)
- Reframing of works over their lifespan as required
- Structural display supports (Assemblages/Sculptures)
- Quality hanging fittings and fixtures on all works (supplied to clients ready to hang or display)
- Security fittings and fixtures available if required
- Light-awareness training for art consultants/client services staff
- Packing and handling training for artworks staff
- Staff training in technology (software and hardware) use

#### **Off site:**

- Appropriate packaging for individual objects including travelling frames and crates

- Museum standard transport of artworks locally, nationally and internationally (contractors)
- Professional museum standard installation of artworks (Artbank staff and contractors)
- Client training in technology (software and hardware) use
- Global client access to advice and assistance from Artbank's trained staff (from packing advice to condition concerns)
- Client floor talks and induction in care elements such as light and environmental awareness

### **Ongoing Preservation and Collection Maintenance Program**

The main aim of Artbank's preservation program is to preserve the physical integrity of each artwork in the Collection. Preservation is an organisation-wide interest, involving all staff. It begins with the appropriate selection of the physical materials and other aspects for acquisition, continues with the appropriate preparation of artworks for display over the long term and the establishment of conditions of display and storage, and includes the occasional conservation of artworks.

Artbank's ongoing and routine **collection maintenance schedule** helps reduce the likelihood of serious damage to collection objects. Collection maintenance strategies include:

- Monitoring the condition of artworks on an ongoing basis through risk management
- Taking action to protect or treat, as appropriate, individual items identified as being damaged or at risk
- Using appropriate and archival packaging to protect artworks
- Maintaining cleanliness in storage areas and endeavouring to clean artworks on a systematic basis using appropriate methods
- Providing appropriate storage conditions for the collections and promoting the provision of such ideal conditions to Artbank's clients
- Adhering to Artbank's Integrated Pest Management Plan, food and drink policies, pest sighting logs and scheduled quarterly pest inspections.

Artbank's **preservation program** comprises the following:

- The development and application of the preservation policies stated above, including selection, storage, counter disaster management planning, integrated pest management plan, staff and client education, to prolong the useful life of artworks by minimising harmful effects
- The treatment of artworks by:
  - minor repair – of slightly damaged frames undertaken by staff who have been given appropriate training;
  - conservation – involving physical treatment of items requiring special attention, by professional conservators;
  - (rarely) substitution - the production of a copy or replacement where applicable (eg. re-prints of faded Photographic items)
- Recording of treatment and condition information in the collection management system.

### **Conservation**

Conservation treatments, when required, are undertaken to prolong the useful life of artworks by treatment, repair or conservation when artworks are at risk, damaged or deteriorated. All treatments are undertaken to a high standard and use appropriate archival materials. In accordance with conservation ethics, treatments are minimal in order to maintain the work's aesthetic and artistic integrity by qualified conservators.

### **Display and Storage Environments**

Public access to the Collection through artwork rental is central to Artbank's mission aims. This means the Artbank Collection is, uniquely for such a public collection, distributed amongst a variety of display environments with differing standards. Clients are required to comply with Artbank's guidelines through the signing of a rental agreement, facilities inspections when practical or risk management strategies.

Artbank manages the appropriate storage of works in these different environments by:

- Ensuring that its premises address preservation needs as defined in this policy and associated documents
- Ensuring that its premises are maintained where possible to continue to meet those specifications
- Ensuring that, as far as possible, client premises match the same specifications as those at Artbank's own storage facilities

### **Stocktake**

Artbank undertakes an annual stocktake and a condition report audit of the Collection, and reports annually to the Australian National Audit Office.

### **Disaster Preparedness**

Artbank has a Counter Disaster Management Plan in place, and all staff are trained in local plans approximately every 2 years. The Plan allows Artbank to prevent, react to and recover from emergency situations that may have an adverse effect on its collection.