



**Statement of Objectives and
Collection Policy for Archive Collections
ARCHON National Repository Number: 3010**

1. INTRODUCTION

This policy statement relates to The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 16 Bedford Square, London WC1B 3JA, United Kingdom.

The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art (the Centre) is an educational charity registered in Britain and administered by a Director. The Director reports annually to the Board of Governors, consisting of officers and faculty of Yale University. There is an Advisory Council, comprised of twelve distinguished representatives from the British academic and museum community, who meet twice a year to make recommendations on the awarding of grants and fellowships.

The Centre promotes and supports the study of, and research into, British art and is a member of the Association of Research Institutes in Art History. It has two complementary purposes: to contribute to the study and understanding of British art and to act as a research centre for scholars working in this field.

The Centre has accepted archive collections since 1977 and initial acquisitions were primarily the papers of art historians covering any study of British art history from the 16th – 21st century. The first professionally qualified archivist to work at the Centre, Charlotte Brunskill, undertook a survey of the collections in 2009 and following on from recommendations made at this time, the Centre now employs two full-time permanent Archivists. The Centre actively collects archive material and now has over forty separate Collected Archives acquired from external sources, as well as an Institutional Archive.

The Centre derives its authority to manage and collect archives from the Memorandum & Articles of Association for The Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 1970.

2. STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

The Paul Mellon Centre seeks to acquire, process, manage, make available and promote its archives to support both internal and external teaching, learning and research activities.

3. LEGISLATION & STANDARDS

The Paul Mellon Centre seeks to observe all relevant archive legislation. It adopts The National Archive's *Standard for Record Repositories* as its policy and aims to store the archives in the best conditions within the limitations of its listed building. Following a significant building refurbishment project in 2014, the Centre's collections have been stored in purpose built, secure and environmentally stable conditions which accord with the relevant British Standards, in particular BS4971: 2017.

4. ACQUISITIONS

4.1 Background & history

The first acquisition was made in 1977 and consists of the papers of Art Historian and Gallery Director, W.G. Constable (1887-1976). These papers were transferred from the Yale Center for British Art to the Centre and mainly relate to Constable's research on the artist, Richard Wilson (1714-1782). For a number of years, the Centre's strength was the study of 18th-century British Art and Architecture, but its remit extends from the medieval to the present and its archives are developing to represent a wider field of British art studies (see 4.2.2 for definition). It has attracted a steady stream of acquisitions ever since, including the papers of important scholars in the field such as Ellis K. Waterhouse, Brinsley Ford and Oliver Millar. Many of the archives have either been created during the course of research for a publication or have subsequently been used to generate publications. An example of the latter is John Ingamells' *A Dictionary of British and Irish Travellers in Italy, 1701 – 1800*, published by the Centre, 1997 which was compiled entirely from Brinsley Ford's archive. Collections may also relate to exhibitions or come about through association with the Centre's wider programme of activities. Often donors have a close relationship with the Centre, for example, serving on its Advisory Committee, or having one or more of their books published by the Centre.

In recent years, the number of archive collections offered to the Centre has increased considerably. Material is carefully assessed against the criteria set out in this document and collections not meeting the appropriate threshold declined. Newer acquisitions include the papers of art critics, art dealers and architects such as Brian Sewell, Frank Simpson (Knoedler & Co) and Dennis Sharp (Connell Ward and Lucas practice). In 2017 the Centre was allocated its first collection under the Government's Acceptance-in-Lieu scheme: the Paul Oppé Archive. More recent acquisitions represent the wider field of British Art studies and include the papers of educationalists, gallerists, biographers and practitioners.

In accordance with the Centre's cradle to grave approach, many of these collections have included not only research papers but material relating to the whole of the individual's life. Since 2007, all material has been acquired by donation.

4.2 Criteria for Acquisition

4.2.1 General Statement

The Paul Mellon Centre seeks to acquire material that:

- is original, unique and not available for study elsewhere
- has multiple levels of interest and high research potential

- builds on existing strengths and supports research on topics of enduring scholarly interest
- expands the Centre's holdings concerning historically under-represented groups and revealing previously untold narratives
- was created by individuals or institutions who have made a significant and lasting contribution to the field of British art and/or the profession and practice of art history and its associated fields, such as curating, art dealing and collecting.

In all relevant activities the Centre observes archival best practice and ethical codes. In particular, it does not seek to compete with other repositories or to split collections between different repositories. It aims to acquire whole collections and does not advocate the sale of particular items. With these principles in mind the Centre always encourages donors to keep collections intact and will liaise with other institutions where necessary to ensure that archives are secured in an appropriate place of deposit. The advice of The National Archives: National Advisory Service will be sought where appropriate.

4.2.2 Subject

The Paul Mellon Centre seeks to acquire primary source material that supports the study and research into British Art from the medieval to contemporary, this includes, but is not solely limited to:

- Painting
- Drawing
- Sculpture
- Prints
- Photography and Lens-Based Media
- Architecture
- Decorative Arts
- Garden and Landscape History
- Historiography, Art Theory, Writing and Criticism
- History of Collecting

The Centre does not acquire archive material concerning graphic design, field archaeology, or the performing arts.

The focus of the material should concern British Art. The Centre's follows a fluid definition of British Art, which is broadly defined and adapts as the interests of those working in the field change. It encompasses art made in Britain or by British artists, but is not solely limited to art made, or artists from, within the geographical boundaries of the British Isles. Rather the Centre understands the field of British art studies to encompass a broad range of subjects and topics related to the artistic and cultural histories of Britain, past and present.

The Centre actively strives to broaden the scope of research on British art, extending it to subjects, materials and debates that have been underrepresented not only within British art studies, but also within art history as a whole.

The Centre does not seek to acquire collections which focus exclusively or primarily on non-British art. However, in recognition of the multi-faceted nature of archives - material relating to art of a wider international context may be acquired if the main concern of the collection is centred on British Art.

The Paul Mellon Centre also seeks to acquire primary source material related to Art History in the UK: the development of the field as an academic course of study; conversations and debates in the sector; and the shaping of the discipline. To this end it is concerned with the individuals, institutions, and societies who significantly influenced in the field.

4.2.3 Archive creators/Whose papers do we acquire?

In pursuit of the above, the Paul Mellon Centre seeks to acquire the papers of a wide range of individuals and institutions working on, or with, British art. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Art and Architectural Historians
- Museum Professionals (typically Directors and curators)
- Art Critics
- Art Dealers, Auctioneers and Auction Houses
- Commercial Art Galleries & Gallerists
- Educators
- Authors and biographers

It is also concerned with the papers of relevant societies or initiatives and anyone working in an art historical capacity.

The Centre does not seek to collect artists' papers (ie. papers where the creator is primarily known as a practitioner and the main focus of the papers is centred on their artistic output). However, in recognition of the fact that more recently- and often in order to support their artistic endeavors – an artist may simultaneously work across the field in a variety of roles (as educators; authors etc.) artists' papers may be acquired if the individual has a multi-faceted reputation and the papers are part of a wider collection.

4.2.4 Scope

Collecting from the above-detailed creators and institutions is not an all or nothing proposition. In some cases, for example where the creator is particularly significant, the Centre may take a cradle to grave approach. The aim being to preserve evidence of the individual's life, work, interests, motivations and network of associates. In other cases, collecting in such depth may not be appropriate and acquisition will be centred exclusively on papers relating to an individual's professional contribution, area of expertise; or the particular project or initiative of an institution. In this respect, each acquisition will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

4.2.5 Material

The Paul Mellon Centre seeks to acquire a wide range of primary source material which might include, but is not limited to the following:

- Correspondence – of a professional nature from colleagues, acquaintances and experts in the field. If a cradle to grave approach is appropriate, personal correspondence from family & friends may also be acquired.
- Diaries and journals – recording day to day events and activities, research notes on visiting collections, viewing works of art etc. If a cradle to grave approach is appropriate, personal diaries recording thoughts, non-professional events etc. may also be acquired.
- Writings – unpublished writings, including essays, lectures, articles, speeches etc.
As a matter of policy we do not collect draft writings of published works unless there is a compelling case for their historic value. Exceptions might be where drafts include a very high volume of substantive information not included in the final publication, or drafts revealing the development of ideas for groundbreaking texts.
- Research notes – of an original, significant and comprehensive nature which add to the body of knowledge on a particular subject. These may be systematically recorded in notebooks, for example.
As a matter of policy, we do not acquire research notes which comprise transcriptions of extracts from published or original sources; notes which are excessively scrappy in nature, have no context and cannot be readily understood
- Exhibition files – correspondence, minutes, installation photographs etc. relating to the planning, organising, publicity and reception of exhibitions, *except where these have been retained by the institution housing the exhibition.*
- Teaching files – lecture notes, course syllabi etc. *except where these have been retained by the institution at which the individual taught.*
- Advising, consulting, project files– correspondence, reports and a wide range of material concerning specific projects or initiatives
- Stock books, ledgers, etc. - containing details of works of art bought and sold, or other financial and administrative matters
- Images – photographs of works of art; exhibition installations etc. where these relate to the initiatives and projects documented in the wider archive.
As a matter of policy, collections which are exclusively image-based are not acquired. Further information about the Centre's Photographic Archive policy is available on the Centre's website

- Annotated or interleaved publications - documenting ongoing research interests or original research. *As a matter of policy, we do not usually acquire publications that are not annotated or interleaved. Such material should be offered to the Centre's Library.*
- Biographical material – birth and death certificates; passports; school reports; photographs; family trees etc. This material is only usually collected where a cradle to grave approach is taken
- Subject files/reference files – containing reference information, published articles, notes from published and original sources, correspondence, photographs etc. *Since these files usually contain a significant volume of material that is not unique, they are rarely acquired wholesale. Rather, if the volume of unique material small and slight in nature they may be declined outright. Alternatively, they may be subject to extensive weeding prior or post acquisition.*
- Newspaper cuttings – since such material is not unique, it is generally only acquired if integral to the collection or if difficult to access elsewhere.

4.2.6 Date

All records are accepted, regardless of date, but existing holdings mostly date from the 20th and 21st Century.

4.2.7 Format

Records are accepted in paper and photographic format. The Centre also acquires and preserves access to digital records. Further information can be found in the Centre's Digital Preservation Policy.

The following material is not usually accepted:

- Three-dimensional objects or works of art - since these are not traditionally considered archive material.
- Slides - since securing their long-term preservation is problematic and costly (in exceptional circumstances slides may be acquired if they are integral to a wider collection)
- Collections containing a significant volume of photocopies - since the Centre seeks to acquire original, unique material; providing public access to photocopied material is problematic for copyright reasons and ensuring its long-term preservation is difficult.

4.3 Procedure for acquisition:

The Centre aims to develop its archival holdings in a coherent and consistent fashion so that together the collections form a body of material that supports research of the highest standard. With this in mind, it has adopted standard procedure for assessing potential offers. Specifically, donors are requested to check whether

the material falls within the Centre's Archive Collection Policy and if it does, to forward some initial assessment information to Archive staff.

Once the initial assessment information has been received, the Centre will follow standard procedure for assessing potential offers, as detailed below:

- Archive staff will review the initial assessment information against the Centre's Archive Collection Policy, existing holdings and resources. They will liaise with Library colleagues, particularly where the acquisition includes published material.
- If the acquisition fits the Centre's collecting criteria and appears promising, Archive staff will visit to review the material wherever it is currently stored. Please note: material will not normally be accepted without review
- All material fitting the Centre's Archive Collection Policy – whether subject to an onsite visit or not - will be formally discussed with the Director and other relevant Centre staff. Please note: no material fitting the Archive Collection Policy will be declined without the consent of the Director.
- If the acquisition is approved by the Director and other relevant Centre staff, the material will be formally acquired. Please note: all acquisitions at the Centre are accompanied by an *Archive Acquisition Form*.
- If the acquisition is declined, the decision will be communicated by letter

Any individual or institution wishing to offer material to the Centre should follow these guidelines/procedure. Further information is available on the Centre's website.

4.4 Timing of acquisition:

Ordinarily archive material is acquired following the death or retirement of the creator, closure of the institution or end of a project. This is because acquiring material at the end of a lifetime facilitates the observance of core archival principles (eg. respect des fonds, provenance and original order) when processing the material. Multi-part acquisitions are not encouraged but can be facilitated, for example, if additional material comes to light after acquisition.

The acquisition process is generally reactive: collections are primarily donated following an approach to the Centre made by the creator, executor or family. However, in some cases, for example where an individual or collection is particularly relevant to the Centre's archival holdings or represents an area which we are keen to develop (such as under-represented voices in the field) the acquisition may be proactive. Specifically, the Centre may approach an individual/institution and work with them to establish an archive during their working life.

In all cases, there is no set time limit from first approach to completion of the acquisition. Each collection is dealt with on a case by case basis and the time frame will vary according to any number of factors. The Centre aims to be sensitive to the particular circumstances of donors and creators, whilst also observing institutional requirements (for example, regarding staffing, resources etc.)

5. TERMS OF DEPOSIT

Except in exceptional circumstances, records are usually acquired by gift (including bequest).

The Centre does not have a budget for acquisitions and all material acquired since 2007 has been by donation. Loans will not normally be accepted. Permanently closed records will not be accepted.

If a collection is particularly significant donors may wish to consider taking advantage of the Government's Acceptance-in-Lieu of tax scheme. Material accepted under the scheme will be donated to the nation and made accessible via a museum, gallery or archive. Offers can be conditional on allocation to a particular institution. Further information about this scheme is available on the Arts Council's website.

No material will be accepted without clear and valid title of ownership. All acquisitions must be accompanied by an *Archive Acquisition Form* signed by the archive's owners and the Centre, covering ownership, copyright, access and arrangement and provision for materials not selected for permanent retention. Material bequeathed to the Centre will be accepted under the same conditions.

6. SELECTION & DE-ACCESSIONING POLICY

Following acquisition and during the cataloguing process Archive staff will, in accordance with best practice in the field, review and assess the collection identifying any material not required for permanent preservation. Material not identified as having long-term historical or research value will be returned or destroyed in a confidential manner as required by the donor and specified on the *Archive Acquisition Form*.

The Centre does not routinely de-accession material in its care except in extenuating circumstances, for example, when the physical condition of an item prevents its preservation. In some instances, particularly in respect of collections acquired prior to the appointment of a professional Archivist in 2011, collections may be reviewed post-acquisition and those identified as non-archival in nature – specifically, containing a high proportion of secondary or not unique material, and having little historic or research value – may be considered for de-accessioning.

All de-accessions will be managed in accordance with the Centre's De-accession & Disposal policy, which adopts the following principles:

- The donor or nominated successor will be contacted and the material will be returned to them
- The Paul Mellon Centre shall not dispose of any documents in its ownership by sale

7. ACCESS

The Centre aims to provide the widest possible access to its holdings. The long term aim is that all collections will be catalogued in detail and the descriptions made available online both via the Centre's website and via additional aggregate archive catalogues such as Archives HUB; the National Archives Discovery and Archives Portal Europe. In the short term, box lists will be created and provide a point of access via the Centre's website.

The Archives will be made available for use to any interested audiences. Some restrictions on access are inevitable because of the nature, contents or physical condition of the archives. Access to records in a poor state of repair has to be restricted until necessary work has been carried out. Fragile or heavily used material may be produced in the form of a surrogate. As far as resources and priorities allow conservation will be undertaken on archives which are physically damaged.

Material containing personal information may be subject to a period of closure in accordance with the Data Protection legislation. Material may also be closed at the request of the donor or require the owner's or creator's permission before access is provided. Material closed under these terms is exceptional and will be discussed and agreed at the time of acquisition and documented in the *Archive Acquisition Form*.

Subject to these restrictions the collections are made available to visitors in the Public Study Room during its advertised opening hours and in accordance with its rules and regulations, free of charge. The Centre reserves the right to restrict or prohibit access, especially in the case where its rules and conditions as outlined in the *Reader Agreement Form* are infringed.

All archives received will be accessioned. They will be made available as soon as possible after sorting and either boxlisting or cataloguing by a qualified archivist. Material that has been boxlisted will be checked before issue and access provided in line with the Centre's Data Protection and Access to Archives policies. Access to all material will be supervised in the Public Study Room.

The Centre aims to provide accurate, professional and helpful advice about its holdings in response to personal, written, electronic and telephone enquiries. Centre staff are happy to answer initial queries and conduct a small amount of research on behalf of enquirers. They are also happy to provide a limited number of copies, free of charge, to individuals who are unable to visit in person. However, detailed research will need to be carried out on-site by enquirers, or agents of enquirers. Further information about how to access the archives is available on the Centre's website.

Copies of records may be made for private research use only subject to the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988 and subsequent legislation. Photocopying and scanning are not permitted for preservation reasons, but – on completion of a *Reader Agreement Form* - researchers can photograph records themselves using their own hand-held device. Where material in the archive is already a copy, either of an original source or a publication, the Centre allows access but does not permit copying as this is an infringement of the Copyright Act. See also the Centre's *Access to the Archives Collections Policy Statement*.

8. REVIEW

This policy statement will be reviewed at least once every five years, the next review being due in October 2028.

CB 2023

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