

Methodist Modern Art Collection

Collections Care and Conservation Policy

Governing body: The Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee, as appointed and delegated authority by the Methodist Council

Date approved by governing body: March 2021 **Date at which policy due for review:** May 2026

MMAC background and purpose

1. Statement of purpose

- 1.1. The Methodist Modern Art Collection (MMAC) contains works of art produced in the last 100 years, which offer perspectives on aspects of Christian faith and life. Some of the artists are people of faith, others are not; some of those who view them are people of faith, some are not.
- 1.2. The Methodist Church values this Collection because through exhibiting the works in local churches, cathedrals and community buildings, as well as museums and art galleries, people are encouraged to explore the meaning of life and to ask questions about faith and about the Methodist Church itself.
- 1.3. The Calling of the Methodist Church is to respond to the gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission. Many of the pictures in this Collection show scenes from the Bible and from the life of Jesus and often they explore the contemporary relevance of these historical events. We hope that those who visit an exhibition will be introduced to a living faith, that they will be encouraged to ask questions and to talk to one another, and that they will enjoy the opportunity to see great works of art in their own context.
- 1.4. The Church recognises the quality of this unique collection in British 20th century religious art and the popularity of this period at the present time with audiences, and that as the Collection

has grown, increasingly international artists are represented which creates broad appeal to wide, diverse audiences globally.

2. Seeing the spiritual: Our vision

- 2.1. The Methodist Modern Art Collection is a resource for the Methodist Church and should be used to underpin our activities. The Management Committee believe that the MMAC has a significant role to play as a tool in reaffirming the calling of the Methodist Church to respond to the Gospel of God's love in Christ and to live out its discipleship in worship and mission.
- 2.2. Our aim is for the Collection to be a distinctive, unique and highly effective Connexional tool for mission.
- 2.3. We will promote the potential of the works of art for theological engagement with the visual arts, enthusing those of Christian faith who appreciate art, as well as helping reach those who are unconvinced by Christian faith, and promoting open-minded responses.
- 2.4. We are keen to develop non-Methodist partnerships, as well as working with others across the Connexion.
- 2.5. We are committed to broadening access to the Collection, particularly through exhibitions (both physical and online) at a popular as well as academic level, thus acknowledging the potential for the Collection to transform wider perceptions of the Methodist Church.

3. A brief history of the Methodist Modern Art Collection

- 3.1. The Collection began in the early 1960s as the inspired initiative of a Methodist layman, Dr John Morel Gibbs (1912-1996), from Penarth in South Wales. Vice-President of the 1958 Conference, he was renowned as a psychologist and academic. Working with the local Methodist minister in Penarth, the Revd Douglas Wollen (1909-1998), who worked as an art critic for publications including *The Times* and the *Methodist Recorder*, Gibbs acquired some outstanding examples of British 20th century art, all chosen to illustrate aspects of the Gospel narrative, from the Nativity to Pentecost.
- 3.2. The resulting Collection of just over 50 works was particularly strong in works by contemporary British artists such as Patrick Heron, Ceri Richards, Graham Sutherland and William Roberts. There were also examples of continental artists such as Georges Rouault, and international artists such as F. N. Souza. The first ambitious nationwide touring exhibition of the Collection – entitled *The Church and the Artist* – took place between July 1963 and September 1965.
- 3.3. The Collection was presented to the Methodist Church and was initially managed by the then Methodist Education Committee, with the Methodist Council having ultimate responsibility (as it does today). The Collection has continued to grow, thanks to the generous support of the Gibbs Family Trust and the donation of works by other benefactors (most recently in 2018, of *Behold the Man*, a watercolour by Norman Adams). It now includes examples of work by such international artists as John Muafangejo, Jyoti Sahi and Sadao Watanabe.
- 3.4. The Collection has continued to tour throughout the United Kingdom and Ireland – as a unit, or as smaller themed selections in chapels, churches, cathedrals, museums and galleries, schools, colleges, universities, and even a shopping centre. During the period between 2016 and 2018, it was seen by nearly 80,000 visitors. It has been displayed as part of local art trails and festivals,

and loans have coincided with major national themes, such as a showing in Hull during the city's 2017 Year of Culture, or to mark local events, such as the 200th anniversary of Walcot Methodist Church in Bath in 2016. We want our exhibitions to be relevant and contemporary for our audiences, addressing issues such as peace and reconciliation, the current refugee crisis, the affirmation of Dalit people, reflecting the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic and ensuring a role in the healing process, and where possible, embracing equality, diversity and inclusion.

- 3.5. From 2019 to 2021, the Collection underwent a 'rejuvenation pause', enabling a planned conservation programme to be undertaken with the aim of a relaunch in 2021. The Collection will then be presented in optimum condition, with many paintings transformed by surface cleaning and other interventions, and protected by stronger frames suitable to withstand the physical demands on the Collection from frequent touring. Going forward, the Committee aims to care for the Collection to the highest standards, 'preserving it for future generations' (Collections Care and Conservation Policy, 2021) and ensuring that it plays a key role in the missional life of the Methodist Church.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Methodist Church is committed to caring for its Collection according to sector guidelines and other approved standards, within the limits of its resources. It aims to strike a careful balance between long-term preservation and continued accessibility.
- 1.2. It is a touring Collection which is shown in a wide variety of venues, such as museums and local churches, where it fulfils an important part of the mission of the Methodist Church. It is accepted that this carries a degree of risk which is partially mitigated by the 'Guidance for Borrowers' (see Appendix 1).

- 1.3. The care and management of the Collection is the responsibility of the Methodist Modern Art Collection Management Committee (MMACMC) on behalf of the Methodist Council. The MMACMC is made up of volunteers who bring a range of skills. While collection care and management activities are the responsibility of all committee members, we actively recruit members with professional museum experience in the care of fine art collections, to support our work in this area.
- 1.4. Committee members take on operational roles when supporting borrowers (the majority of whom are volunteers without professional museum training). The MMACMC seeks to be open and welcoming to those wishing to borrow works and flexible in its terms and conditions and guidance where appropriate, while ensuring the collection is preserved for future generations.
- 1.5. The MMACMC places an emphasis on preventive conservation but when remedial conservation or restoration is required will employ professional conservators such as those found on the Institute of Conservation's (ICON) Conservation Register.

2. Definitions

For the purposes of this document the following definitions have been adopted:

Preventive conservation: Measures necessary to prevent damage to artworks, and to minimise the deterioration of works by, for example, controlling their environment.

Remedial conservation: Action applied directly to an artwork with the aim of arresting the processes of deterioration, and to stabilise its structure in order to preserve it.

Repair or restoration: Action applied directly to an artwork with the aim of mitigating the structural or visual effects of deterioration or damage. On a painting, for example, this may include retouching areas of lost paint.

3. Overview of current situation

- 3.1. The Collection does not currently have a permanent home. The Methodist Church has a contract for the storage of its Collections with Restore Group PLC at a site managed by the National Conservation Services (www.ncs.org.uk) at Upper Heyford, Oxfordshire. This offers museum-standard storage for valuable collections with access to fully-qualified conservators and spaces for conservation work to take place on site.
- 3.2. The store at Upper Heyford has been approved by the National Security Adviser as meeting the specifications in PD5454 and EN16893 with regard to security and meets the humidity and temperature specifications in BS 4971:2017. The pest management and housekeeping programmes meet the standards for museum storage.
- 3.3. A review of the storage was undertaken by Matassa Toffolo in 2020. The report recommended that the MMACMC identify specialist fine art storage while searching for a permanent home for the Collection.
- 3.4. Qualified freelance fine art conservators have undertaken a review of the Collection and priorities for conservation have been agreed. A rolling programme of conservation (including reframing) is underway, and has been funded by the Methodist Church.
- 3.5. A Collections Care, Conservation and Development working group (CCCD) was set up in 2021 to monitor the progress on the conservation plan. The CCCD reports to the MMACMC which meets regularly.
- 3.6. Records of Collections care activities are kept with the Collection archives and will be added to the new Collections database using MODES from 2021. MMACMC retains records of every treatment carried out on artworks, by members of the committee (where this is appropriate) or freelance conservators.

- 3.7. A valuation of the Collection was undertaken by Bryn Sales of Sotheby's, on 2 October 2013.

4. Standards

- 4.1. In seeking new storage and a permanent home for the Collection, the MMACMC will aim to store museum Collections in accordance with PAS 198:2012, while archival Collections will take additional guidance from PD 5454:2012, and digital media in accordance with BS 4783:1988. This will be reviewed as new guidelines become available.
- 4.2. Work undertaken by conservators employed by the MMACMC will conform to the standards set down in the Code of Ethics of the Institute of Conservation (ICON) Code of Conduct and Professional Standards, and to BS 4971:2002.
- 4.3. MMACMC will seek to comply with the following standards:
- SPECTRUM 5: UK Museum Collections Management Standard <https://collectionstrust.org.uk/spectrum>
 - Benchmarks in Collections Care for Museums, Archives and Libraries 0 2011 <http://collectionstrust.org.uk/resource/benchmarks-in-collections-care/>

5. Insurance

- 5.1. The Methodist Modern Art Collection is fully insured (all risks) while in store, in transit and on loan by the Methodist Council with Methodist Insurance (Fine Art).
- 5.2. The MMACMC will continue to seek to mitigate the risks to the Collection through the requirements outlined in the 'Guidance for Borrowers' and through negotiation with borrowers as to appropriate mitigating actions.
- 5.3. Insurance may be extended on occasion to include extra works borrowed for an exhibition. The MMACMC will provide full details in advance, and extra fees may be passed to the venue.

- 5.4. When works are loaned to exhibitions outside the Methodist Church, borrowers are required to insure the work to the agreed valuation on a nail-to-nail basis. The total value of such cover will be reported to the insurers via the Connexional Office for Legal and Constitutional Practice of the Methodist Church.

6. Documentation

- 6.1. The MMACMC will keep records of all works in the Collection, to Spectrum 5 standards, on MODES which will include all condition checks and treatments carried out on artworks and items in the archives.
- 6.2. A member of the committee, identified and agreed by the Chair, will hold the licence for MODES and be responsible for ensuring that updates (including acquisitions, condition reports and conservation reports) are made in a timely manner. One other member of the Committee will support the nominated person in updating the database in case of their absence for whatever reason.
- 6.3. Any conservator carrying out treatments will supply copies of the treatment records in a format suitable for MODES.
- 6.4. Changes in the condition of any object will be notified to the CCCD working group, who will recommend action to the MMACMC.

7. Cleaning of artworks

Works will be cleaned by an appropriate conservator. They are not cleaned regularly, only when they require it, to prevent unnecessary abrasion and damage to the surface.

8. Storage materials

- 8.1. The MMACMC is aware that all objects should be protected in inert packaging materials in a way that protects the artwork from chemical or physical damage while in store.

- 8.2. If artworks need to be protected with polythene sheet or bubble wrap, they are first covered with acid-free tissue paper.
- 8.3. Storage cases will be clearly marked to identify the object inside.

9. Display materials and methods

- 9.1. Wherever possible, materials are chosen in accordance with the Collections Trust Signposts Factsheet 2: Materials for Storage and Display.
- 9.2. All mounting and framing will be done by professional framers to museum standards.

10. Loans in

- 10.1. In the event that the MMACMC borrows works, it will treat all incoming loans according to the requirements set out in the loan agreement between it and the lending body. The MMACMC will notify the lending body if there is any change in its circumstances which mean that it can no longer meet the requirements set out in this agreement.

If the lending body does not supply a Condition Check Form for each object, the MMACMC will use its own Condition Report Form.

- 10.2. It is the responsibility of the link members, agreed in consultation with the Chair, to ensure that the measures relating to loans are in place, communicated and acted upon.

11. Loans out

- 11.1. All requests for loans from the Collection will be assessed individually before a decision is reached. The condition of the objects, the location, environment and security of the venue, transport and personnel involved will all be reviewed.
- 11.2. Two link members from the MMACMC, agreed in consultation with the Chair, will be allocated to each borrower to provide support in the loans process where a loan is agreed.

- 11.3. Every borrower will be asked to fill out a Facilities Report using the template available from the UK Registrars Group.
- 11.4. The Guidance for Borrowers (Appendix 1) and the Exhibition Loans Policy (Appendix 5) will be sent to all borrowers.
- 11.5. The link members individually or jointly will carry out a site visit to assess the ability of the borrower to comply with the security, environmental, handling and conservation advice stipulated in the guidance and the loan agreement (to be available as downloadable PDFs).

In particular, that:

- works must not be hung close to radiators or other heat sources;
- light-sensitive works may not be exposed to direct sunlight and kept in the dark when the venue is closed;
- when on display, artworks are checked daily by the invigilator and any changes to the condition are recorded on the condition report that accompanies the loan and reported immediately to the link committee members and forwarded to the Chair of the MMACMC;
- suitable security is in place; and
- borrowers are aware of health and safety issues in handling the works both in their crates and during the installation, and have public liability insurance in place.

- 11.6. The condition of the artwork to be loaned will be recorded using the Condition Report, with photographs showing all parts of the artwork and with existing damage clearly marked. This form is part of the loan agreement and a copy will accompany the artwork when it leaves the stores.
- 11.7. Every artwork will be checked against the original condition report when it is returned to the store. The loan details and the outcome of the check are recorded on the catalogue entry on MODES.

12. Transport of the Collection

- 12.1. Appropriate travelling cases/crates will be available for all works in the Collection.
- 12.2. Crates and packaging will be clearly labelled with the title, artist and image of the contents to avoid unnecessary handling in unpacking.
- 12.3. Borrowers are required to make provision for storing the cases and crates when not in use.
- 12.4. Borrowers are required to use specialist fine art transporters with two drivers in attendance, unless an alternative has been agreed in advance with the MMACMC.
- 12.5. Artworks will always travel with a recent condition report.
- 12.6. Artworks must not be left unattended in vehicles.

13. Training

- 13.1. Storage suppliers will be required to meet national standards for Collections care and therefore, when in store, the Collection is only handled by people who have received appropriate training.
- 13.2. Borrowers will be advised that volunteers should have appropriate training in lifting crates and hanging artworks. The MMACMC will recommend the use of professional technicians for exhibitions wherever possible.

- 13.3. The MMACMC aims to have at least four members who have a professional knowledge of the care of fine art collections, and who can offer advice to borrowers through comment on the technical aspects of loan requests and during installation and de-installation.
- 13.4. Two members of the MMACMC will act as key links for borrowers and will offer training to volunteers on condition checking and invigilation/stewarding.

14. Ethics and legislation

In caring for its Collection, the MMACMC adheres to the following legislation and ethical guidelines:

- Museum Association Code of Ethics, updated 2015 www.museumsassociation.org/download?id=1155827
- ICOM Code of Ethics for Museums (2006)
- Health and Safety at Work Act (1974) and amendments

15. Plans for Improvement

See table on next page

	Item	By	Responsible
15.1	Complete registrar work programme and renumber the Collection using museum-standard numbering system and a unique collection identifier	March 2021	CCC
15.2	Appoint committee member to take responsibility for the MODES CMS and upload condition reports	May 2021	
15.3	Insurance review	May 2021	
15.4	Identify travelling case requirements and supplier	May 2021	CCC
15.5	Revise and adopt the current condition report	May 2021	MMAC
15.6	Revise and adopt Loan Agreement	May 2021	
15.7	Revise and adopt Guidance for Borrowers	May 2021	
15.8	Check labels on packing cases to ensure that they are correct and any other labels are removed	June 2021	
15.9	Revaluation of the Collection	December 2021	
15.10	Complete the conservation identified in the 2018 conservation review	December 2021	
15.11	Consider the companies identified in the storage report and assess viability of moving the collection to specialist fine art storage	December 2021	
15.12	Ensure that condition reports are added to MODES CMS	December 2021	
15.13	Review the scope of the archives project and identify where these are held. Develop a plan to bring together records, box and list to Archive standards and add to MODES CMS	May 2022	
15.14	Continue to pursue leads for a permanent home for the Collection	May 2022	

16. Appendices

1. Guidance for Borrowers
2. Condition Report Form
3. Exhibition Loan Agreement Form