

Methodist Modern Art Collection

Exhibition Loans 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 Modern Art Collection of just over 50 outstanding works has particular strength in British 20th century religious painting by eminent artists of the period such as Patrick Heron, Ceri Richards, Graham Sutherland and William Roberts. From the beginning it was conceived as a travelling Collection and the first ambitious nationwide tour of the Collection entitled *The Church and the Artist* was organised between July 1963 and September 1965. The Collection has continued to grow thanks to generous support from the Gibbs Family Trust and donations by other benefactors as well as through acquisition and now includes examples of works by international artists such as John Muafangejo, Jyoti Sahi and Sadao Watanabe.

- 1.2. The Collection has continued to tour throughout Great Britain, in whole or as a themed selection to chapels, churches and cathedrals, museums and galleries, schools, colleges and universities, an auction centre and has even been displayed in a shopping centre. It has been shown as part of local art trails and festivals, and loans have coincided with major national themes such as a showing in Hull during its Year of Culture in 2017 or to mark local events such as the 200th anniversary of Walcot Methodist Church in Bath. The Collection has reached out to broad audiences and between 2016 and 2019, nearly 80,000 visitors viewed this significant collection. The MMAC Management Committee (MMACMC) remains committed to ensuring that the Collection is made available to diverse communities and is a key tool for mission for the Methodist Church, enabling us to build relationships and partnerships.
- 1.3. Such continuous touring over many years has, however, taken a toll on the fabric of the works of art themselves and on their frames, while cases have suffered damage and been confusingly labelled. Without appropriate intervention, this valuable asset might have been lost to the Church as a missional tool. Following a Practice Review in 2018, it was decided that touring would need to cease while urgent remedial conservation and re-framing was undertaken, and transport cases were upgraded, supported by funding from the Strategy and Resources Committee (SRC). This rejuvenation pause enabled a planned conservation programme to be undertaken and a review of all aspects of exhibition programming and administrative organisation to be undertaken to ensure that borrowing the Collection runs smoothly.
- 1.4. From late 2021, assuming it is safe to do so with regard to Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, we plan to tour the Collection, sharing these unique works in up to two or three temporary exhibitions nationwide each year.

In addition, we hope to make a number of focused relevant loans as appropriate, such as those which toured Chester Cathedral in the autumn of 2021. We will celebrate our re-launch with

a special first year of programming, branded appropriately, beginning with an Art Trail in Coventry as part of the City of Culture celebrations, which we hope will raise our profile and aid us in attracting enthusiasm from future partners to find a new permanent home for the Collection.

- 1.5. These exhibitions and displays will emerge from strong partnerships, working with local churches, volunteer groups, cathedrals, educational establishments and museums and galleries; we will seek to maintain relationships long after the Collection has been displayed, encouraging partners and visitors to become members of our Friends. We will also look to develop 'hub' partners who borrow items from the Collection on more than one occasion, enabling us to develop relationships and deepen partnerships. It may be possible to agree a three-year programme of key loans to certain sites, as appropriate.
- 1.6. Our long-term aim is to be able to offer smaller bespoke 'package' exhibitions to venues as appropriate, ensuring new research and interpretation is shared beyond one showing. This will enable exploration of specific theological themes and our own fascinating history, telling the unique story of the Methodist Modern Art Collection to the present day, as well as the potential for 'in focus displays'. 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 in interpretation, and, where possible, embracing equality, diversity and inclusion.

2. Strategic context and aims

- 2.1. As we emerge from our rejuvenation pause, we seek to ensure that the Collection is curated in new and imaginative ways, and relevant to visitors who will see works in varied contexts, exploring crucial relevant global themes. We

look to continuing sharing this unique Collection through a temporary exhibition programme as well as individual loans, as and when considered appropriate.

- 2.2. Exhibitions selected from the Collection will be expected to engage in the following ways as appropriate to borrowing venues/organisations:
- To highlight Mission, promoting the potential of the works for theological engagement with the visual arts regionally, nationally and internationally.
 - To aid the discovery and understanding of the paintings in our care, exploring the subjects represented and the artists themselves, including their religious and spiritual influences.
 - To promote knowledge of and access to the Collection, raising its profile within Methodism and beyond.
 - To continue to reach wide audiences engaging those of Christian faith who appreciate art, as well as those of all faiths, reaching multicultural communities, and those of no faith.
 - To develop strong partnerships with local churches of all denominations, museums and galleries, schools and universities, building lasting benefits to all concerned.
 - To create opportunities for individuals from a wide range of backgrounds to engage with our Collection, including working with volunteers.
 - To create opportunities with each exhibition or loan for related participative experiences through a programme of workshops, talks, activities and acts of worship.
 - To offer professional development opportunities, especially to students.
 - To enable artists, poets and other creatives to respond to the Collection during exhibitions.
 - To enrich the lives of members of the local community where our Collection is loaned, both in rural areas where culture may not be

accessible, and in deprived urban areas where cultural provision may be poor.

- To enhance the cultural offer at times of appropriate national, regional and local celebrations and commemorations.
- To respond to current national events, particularly the healing process and recovery from the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic, both short and longer term.

- 2.3. **Bespoke tailored smaller exhibitions:** The long-term aim of the MMACMC is to be able to offer smaller bespoke 'package' exhibitions to venues as appropriate, ensuring new research and interpretation is shared beyond one showing. This will enable exploration of specific theological topics, art historical themes and our own fascinating history, telling the unique story of the MMAC to the present day (which we know from feedback intrigues audiences). It will also allow exploration of 'in focus displays' with guest curators centred upon key art historical works or theological themes. We will consider the potential for 'in focus displays' centred upon significant works such as Graham Sutherland's *The Deposition*, the remarkable examples by women artists in our Collection including the less well-known Eularia Clarke, as well as Elisabeth Frink, Maggie Hambling and Susie Hamilton, in addition to works by international artists such as John Muafangejo, Jyoti Sahi, F. N. Souza and Sadao Watanabe.

3. Relationships

- 3.1. **Nurturing relationships:** The MMACMC seeks to engage with churches, volunteers, communities and institutions across the country during the organisation of exhibition loans, supporting whenever possible (and advising on) all aspects of the loan. It is our intention to create enduring relationships and potential partnerships when we tour the Collection; this will ensure that after exhibitions end, we continue to nurture audiences and future supporters, following up with lectures,

talks, and potentially further loans, and regularly update those who have engaged with the Collection about our future plans.

- 3.2. **Growing the 'Friends of the MMAC':** We will actively encourage new members of the Friends organisation each time we tour the Collection to a venue, and see this as a key mechanism for communicating with those who have begun a conversation with the works, raising awareness of future opportunities to see exhibitions.
- 3.3. **Listening and responding:** Regular feedback from borrowers will be collated including information from focus groups drawn from organisers, ensuring learning points are followed up on, to improve delivery and adopt new appropriate suggestions year on year, ensuring a responsive approach to relationship building.

4. Borrowing the Collection

- 4.1. **Planning:** The MMACMC aims to produce a rolling exhibition schedule to aid planning up to two years in advance, and to ensure the geographical spread of touring exhibitions and the audiences they will reach, while also identifying potential hub institutions to work with on a longer-term basis. We aim to encourage a two-year period of preparation for larger selections from the Collection, with shorter periods being possible, depending on the size and complexity of the exhibition, art trail or display, in discussion with the Management Committee.
- 4.2. **Guidance for Borrowers:** All procedures for borrowing the Collection are available online and borrowers are encouraged to make contact as early as possible. Our aim is that a revised Guidance for Borrowers, taking into account our new suite of policies, will remain a key tool for those borrowing the Collection and will be easily accessible and comprehensible.
- 4.3. **Loan Agreement:** The newly reviewed Loan Agreement includes clear terms and conditions of the agreed loan which will be signed by the Chair of the MMACMC or a nominated deputy and the borrowing organisation, ensuring that if the borrower is independent of the display location that an agreement is signed with them too. Our aim is to ensure that two versions of the loan agreement will be available – one for voluntary organisations and the other for museums and galleries with accredited status.
- 4.4. **Interpretation:** The Management Committee aims to assist groups wishing to borrow the Collection particularly with interpretation (see the Mission and Interpretation Policy), events, online activities, and fundraising, bearing in mind the volunteer capacity of members themselves.
- 4.5. **Reporting:** A full report following each exhibition will continue to be requested. Previous experience of exhibitions drawn from the Collection, art trails across a number of venues, and participation in festival programming will continue to be reported in detail in the Friends Newsletter, drawn from the exhibition report by the borrower, often in collaboration with a link committee member. Such articles are shared with borrowers, to inspire and enthuse those contemplating a loan exhibition.
- 4.6. **Financial and security implications:** We aim to support borrowers throughout all aspects of the borrowing process, ensuring they understand the full financial and security implications of borrowing the Collection, as well as the numerous lasting benefits of an exhibition within their local community. Advice can be given as to what needs to be included when budgeting for an exhibition, and how the fee is charged and what it covers can be discussed. Installing temporary alarm systems can be a source of anxiety for borrowers and we will seek to be able to supply a number of options for these to be installed.
- 4.7. **Collections Management System:** Having entered the Collection in full on to the MODES Collection Management System, we will aim to ensure that at all times, locations of works are maintained and that actions are taken to put in place clear overall systems to document all aspects of exhibition organisation. This includes acting upon any actions noted in the Condition Reports. A member

of the Management Committee will be nominated to hold the MODES licence and ensure that locations are maintained, with the support of one other member as back-up.

- 4.8. **Printed materials:** Following exhibitions, these will be fully archived along with any relevant interpretation.
- 4.9. **Transport:** The Collection will travel to exhibitions with approved transport carriers, meeting all requirements set out by the MMACMC including ensuring that the transport is accompanied by two people at all times, or in special circumstances in private transport with two adults, when this has been agreed in detail.
- 4.10. **Link Management Committee Members:** Depending on the size and scope of an exhibition as well as the venue, the MMACMC aims to propose two key link committee members, or a number of committee members who will join a local planning group to ensure the process of mounting an exhibition runs smoothly, acting as a conduit between the borrower and the relevant working group of the Management Committee. It is hoped that where two or more contact committee members are appointed that they will have complementary skills to cover all aspects of exhibition delivery. At least one of these contact committee members will have professional museum experience to give guidance on all practical matters relating to exhibition loans until such time as a professional member of staff is able to take on this role. The responsibilities of the link committee members will be outlined in a clear document and they will work with community groups and volunteers to aid planning and ensure that the Collection is safely hung and displayed, as well as interpreted and publicised, including agreeing to deliver a session on training for invigilation and interpretation (see the Interpretation and Mission Policy).
- 4.11. All matters relating to the management of exhibitions are initially dealt with by the MMACMC 'Exhibitions and Planning' working group, which meets before each full Management Committee meeting, to consider Expressions of Interest and Loan Requests and to make recommendations

for loans and exhibition planning. This working group will continue to oversee and support exhibitions as they develop and are fully programmed with events, ensuring oversight at all stages.

5. Access to the Collection

- 5.1. It is our aim to ensure that the Collection is made available to broad audiences through a varied exhibition programme with inclusive exhibition interpretation which is appropriately presented for easy reading by, for instance, the partially sighted, and interpreted into other languages if applicable (see the Mission and Interpretation Policy). Exhibitions should be sensitive in planning to the needs of all, with appropriate measures in place to meet a variety of access needs.
- 5.2. The exhibition programme will be developed with the Audience Development Plan in mind to ensure that we are as diverse as possible in identifying and encouraging broad audiences.
- 5.3. The MMACMC aims to ensure institutions are not discouraged from borrowing the Collection through insurance or security concerns. As well as cathedrals, educational institutions such as schools and universities, and museums and galleries, the MMACMC remains committed to showing the Collection in churches, church buildings and other less traditional venues, as long as facilities reports are completed with a member of the Management Committee and appropriate security measures addressed. The Methodist Modern Art Collection is fully insured while in store and on loan by the Methodist Council with Methodist Insurance (Fine Art). Borrowers are required to have public liability insurance. For each exhibition the MMACMC will continue to seek to mitigate the risks to the Collection through the requirements outlined in the Guidance for Borrowers and stipulated in the Loan Agreement and through negotiation with borrowers as to appropriate mitigating actions. Accredited museums and galleries must provide a nail-to-nail fine art insurance policy.