

Photo Museum Ireland Collection Policy



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<p>Date of next policy review: 10.03.26 Person responsible for review: Trish Lambe</p>	<p>No longer than 1 year following approval of the policy CEO/ Artistic Director</p>

Version Control

Version	Author	Date	Changes
1	Trish Lambe	10.03.22	First Version
2	Trish Lambe	16.03.23	Name of collection updated
3	Trish Lambe	27.08.25	Name of collection updated. Update to mission statement. Type and quantity of the present collections. Acquisition and upkeep of archival and supporting documentation. Approach to loans. Legal limitations on collecting.

Photo Museum Ireland

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Photo Museum Ireland Mission Statement

We are the national centre for contemporary photography in Ireland. We connect people with inspirational, thought-provoking visual culture, preserve, curate, and promote great photography, and support the artists of today and tomorrow.

Purpose of the Collection

- The Collection aims to establish an archive collection of digital records, artists' portfolio prints and records that will preserve and promote an important series of works by key modern and contemporary Irish photographic artists and other artists working in Ireland.
- It establishes a permanent photographic archive that offers an authoritative overview of modern and contemporary Irish photography practices.
- Photo Museum Ireland's collection is held in trust for the public benefit and made available for education purposes.
- The collection's establishment is central to the Museum's goal of establishing a museum-standard space for photography and to its work in fostering awareness, understanding, and critical engagement with the art of photography.
- This policy is intended to help the Museum achieve its mission through focused collecting. It recognises the collection as its greatest resource and seeks to be socially inclusive while at the same time providing accountability and greater value for money to the taxpayer.
- This Collection is a cultural and heritage photographic resource that is held in trust by the people of Ireland.

Guiding Principles

- The Collection is an archive initiative that establishes a creative repository for the preservation and mediation of photographic prints produced and stored to archival standards.
- The aim is to work with artists to digitise their key bodies of work. build an archival depository comprised of portfolio records featuring key series of bodies of work by artists as opposed to one-off, single-framed artworks or finished 'pieces'
- An agreed selection of prints of series will be printed and retained by the Collection.
- The aim of the artists' print series is to reflect important artistic practices in Ireland across the span of the artists' careers. It aims to preserve and promote the work of photographers in Ireland, honouring past generations and recognising the achievements of modern and contemporary Irish artists and artists working in Ireland.
- It aims to reflect changing social movements and artistic practices through the acquisition of items that reflect an awareness of the evolving context, medium and time in which they are made.

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- It will seek to establish archival systems and work with artists and estates to ensure that the work is securely preserved and held in trust for the public's benefit.
- Subject to agreed arrangements with the artists or their representatives, be made available to curators, researchers and the wider public through online Museum features, seminars, exhibitions or publications, creating an educational and historical resource for the future understanding of photographic practices in Ireland.
- The portfolio sets are digitally prepared and produced by Photo Museum Ireland in agreement with each artist - except by arrangement.
- Each artist will approve the agreed set of prints prior to formal accession.
- Artists and/or their representatives will be paid for their photographs, in line with the Museum's ongoing commitment to paying artists fairly.
- Artists will be consulted to assess the archival capacity of their prints and inform the development of the Collection.
- The Collection will be developed to include other materials, such as negatives, transparencies, plates, and digital images, where appropriate.
- All accessioned items will be the property of Photo Museum Ireland which will hold and care for the collection of artworks for the benefit of the people of Ireland.
- The Collection will be developed over the coming years following the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland guidelines in line with Photo Museum Ireland Artistic and EDI policies. The museum produced the initial set of prints for the launch exhibition in 2022. Subject to sign-off and approval by the artists, these high-grade archival-quality prints were formally acquired for the Collection. Each artist was paid for the print if it was not gifted.

Guiding Curatorial Principles - Framing Critical Practice in Ireland

The curatorial choices are based on the excellence of the artist's overall practice, subject to the following guidelines:

- The artist's practice shows excellence in artistic ambition and achievement and is worthy of preservation.
- The artist's practice resonates powerfully with a particular subject, theme, issue, history, or set of ideas.
- The artist's practice complements the existing Collection or has a scope beyond existing items in the Collection.
- The artist's practice may have developed or been developing new ways of thinking, triggering re-evaluation of received narratives or documenting new chapters of artistic innovation.
- The Museum will actively seek to reflect our organisation's Diversity, Equality and Inclusion policy and procedures within the Collection to reflect a more inclusive and diverse view of Irish society.

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- The Museum will actively seek to include a diverse range of artists in the Collection and represent a broad range of artists throughout their careers.
- The ambition for most new acquisitions will be to include them in the ongoing displays of the Collection, whether by physical exhibition or digital means.

Scope and development of the Collection

- The collection is being developed primarily as a digitisation initiative from which a series of fine art prints by artists' portfolio sets.
- It will also include prints, digital records and ephemera such as press cuttings and biographical information.
- The collection aims to give a representative overview of the concerns and issues addressed by contemporary photographic practices in Ireland and/or work by Irish artists.
- Where possible, permit acquisitions will be made directly with living artists and/or their Estates.
- The condition of the collection is good to very good.
- Photo Museum Ireland's Collection Manager will manage the collection and develop it with artists and their estates.

Management of the Collection

The management of the collection is informed by the Museum Standards Programme of Ireland recommendations and builds the audit on our collection by Archives Ireland - specialists in the field, commissioned in August 2023.

- The collection is housed in a separate locked storage space on archival shelves.
- Prints are held in individual archive portfolio boxes - with a box per artist/series.
- Each print is securely housed in archival sheets.
- The HVAC air conditioning system was upgraded and installed in Q4 2023. System review and upgrade Q1 2025.
- As the Collection develops and, subject to increased storage and archiving facilities becoming available, it will include photographic images, negatives, transparencies and digital photographic images and ephemera that fill gaps in the existing holdings or otherwise enliven elements of the history of modern and contemporary photography that are not already represented in the Collection.
- The Collection will not initially include cameras, lenses, photographic enlargers, darkroom equipment, film projectors, and objects relating to motion picture history. However, it may evolve over time to include such items for their educational value. The overall size and scope of the Collection are dependent on the level of physical, financial, and human resources available to the Museum.

Type and Quantity of the collection:

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423 archival pigment inkjet and c-type photographic prints. These items are contained in 26 boxes. While the largest print is 70cm x 90cm, the majority of the prints measure 50cm x 70cm.

The collection includes:

- 111 individual archival pigment inkjet prints by photographer Tony O'Shea.
- 77 individual archival pigment inkjet prints by photographer Helen Hooker O'Malley.
- 59 individual archival pigment inkjet prints by photographer Lorraine Tuck.
- 51 individual archival pigment inkjet prints by photographer Okamura, Akihiko (Estate of Akihiko Okamura 1929-1985).
- 18 individual archival pigment inkjet prints by photographer Steve Pyke.

Acquisition and upkeep of archival and supporting documentation.

- The Museum is committed to maintaining an archive of all documentation relating to its collections. In doing so, it acknowledges the need for an ethical approach to acquisition and collection management, which is also central to the efficient use of the collection for museum activities.
- Personal data recorded during the documentation of items gifted to the museum are subject to the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR). When items are entered into the museum, a copy of the museum's Privacy policy will be given to the depositor. See the supporting Acquisition policy.
- In accordance with this policy, the PMI Collection Manager will normally be delegated authority and responsibility for accepting or rejecting potential gifts or bequests to the Museum.
- Copyright will be retained by the artist. The acquisition agreement will request shared copyright for the purposes of promoting and sharing the artwork with the public.
- All items, whether on loan or donated, must be accompanied by relevant supporting documentation, which the Museum will maintain. The Museum will seek to obtain titles for the small number of items on 'permanent loan' to the museum but which are in storage or otherwise return the items to their owner.

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- All items accepted by the Collection Manager into the Museum's collection on behalf of the Council shall be accessioned to standards outlined by the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland.
- It is policy that a movement and location control system to track the location of objects when taken from the museum stores will be maintained.
- The suitability of items with a view to display for public exposure/collection Manager, taking into account the cost of conservation, display and rarity of the object.
- All measures will be taken to ensure that the collections are secure both while on display and/or in storage.
- All objects will be stored in accordance with best practices as outlined by the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland at either the off-site store at Beechpark or in the store in the museum building.
- This includes appropriate packing, maintenance, security and monitoring of appropriate environmental conditions.
- The museum will endeavour to make all of its collections available for the public to study wherever possible online on our website and through limited access to the artefacts. While space for the physical display of objects is limited, all accessible objects will be photographed and placed online in the Recent Acquisitions section of the museum website.
- While space for the physical display of objects is limited, all accessioned objects will be photographed and placed online in the Recent Acquisitions section of the museum website.
- The Museum is committed to providing interpretative displays to the public. These displays can include items from either the Museum's collection or those borrowed from other institutions and will generally be informed by the Mission Statement.
- At present, the Museum's staff consists of 8 core staff and 2 part-time staff.
- The Museum will provide training for museum staff in object handling and preventive conservation through the Heritage Council to help safeguard collections and to utilise the staffing resources more effectively.

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- We will not accept long-term loans as a method of acquisition.

Methods of Acquisition

These regulations will govern the acquisition of objects for the collection at Photo Museum Ireland

- Acquisition proposals can be initiated by the Museum or by an offer being made by an artist or the artist's representative.
- Acquisition proposals are processed, in accordance with the guidelines set out above, by specialist in-house Curators/Directors with input from one or more of the panel of External Curatorial Advisors shown on the last page of this document.
- Acquisition proposals are submitted to the Acquisitions Committee of the Museum, set out below, for approval.
- In specified circumstances, the Acquisitions Committee can delegate approval for smaller acquisitions to staff members or the committee itself.
- Merit, relevance, price, availability, provenance, condition and good title must be satisfactorily ascertained before work is put to the Acquisitions Committee for final approval.
- The Museum will not acquire, whether by purchase, gift, bequest or exchange, any item unless the Committee is satisfied that the valid title of the item in question can be acquired. In particular, no item will be collected which has been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin, including the Republic of Ireland, or an intermediate country in which it may have been legally owned, in violation of the country's laws.
- Acquisitions are made by purchase, commission, donation, heritage donations in lieu of tax under Revenue rules, bequest or pledged gifts or long-term loans.
- Gifts and bequests will be considered under the same criteria as purchases and commissions. The Museum will not typically accept restrictions or conditions on gifts and bequests unless they are objectively justified.
- The Museum uses revenue raised from philanthropic donations to fund purchases from artists.
- Any acquisition, either by purchase or by gift, is subject to having the Transfer Agreements signed by both parties.
- The Transfer Agreement will provide for the appropriate rights of the artist, the artist's representative, and the Museum.
- The Museum will issue acquisition agreements outlining museum use for work (or and agree on copyright licencing).
- In the majority of cases, the works are produced and printed by Photo Museum Ireland under the supervision of the artists or the representative of their Estate.
- The museum shall extend to any donor the right of anonymity.

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- Where items have been collected in the past as a gift in good faith but where no clear transfer of title has been secured or where the title is ambiguous, the Collection Manager will attempt to contact the donor to secure the title. If, following reasonable effort, the Collection Manager is unable to contact the donor and the title is not secured, a detailed note of the process shall be held in the object history file.
- The museum has a limited history of purchasing items for its collection. Purchases only occur in exceptional circumstances and only if funding is approved by the Acquisitions Sub-Committee and Board. This situation is unlikely to change before the review of this policy.
- The Collection Manager can refuse the acquisition of any item that would have significant financial implications for storage, conservation, display, or security.
- Under no circumstances shall the Museum provide an appraisal of a donation's value. It may only offer suggestions concerning outside appraisal services.
- The Museum and its staff will abide by the MSPI standards.
- The Museum shall always be aware of and sensitive to the concerns of all communities and traditions when considering the acquisition of artefacts and other materials.
- The Museum hereby confirms its acceptance of the principle that the collection is held in trust for future generations. Only under exceptional circumstances, as outlined in the Museum's Disposal Policy, will de-accessioning or disposal of any item from the collections be permissible.
- All Acquisitions are to be outright and unconditional.
- All donations to the Museum's collections are irrevocable upon their formal and physical transfer to the Museum.

Legal limitations on collecting.

Photo Museum Ireland will not acquire artworks that contravene our DEI and Equality and general governance policies. We will not accept objects under circumstances that would be damaging to the Museum's standing and reputation. At all times, we will acquire artworks that reflect and address:

- Legislation relating to pornographic images and discrimination in line with our artistic policy [here](#).
- The Museum will operate within the [International Council Of Museums Code of Ethics](#) as a regulating factor.
- We will operate within the Safe to Create, Visual Artists Ireland and Arts Council of Ireland guidelines.

Acquisitions workflow

The workflow for acquisitions is outlined below:

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- All acquisition proposals are prepared by the Director, curatorial team and Collection Manager for preliminary approval. Proposals for acquisitions come internally from programming staff and externally via international curatorial peers, artists, gallerists, collectors and other individuals.
- The artistic team reviews proposals at an internal pre-acquisitions meeting. Proposals are considered in the context of the artist's practice and career to date, whether the artwork(s) fits with the criteria of the PMI's Acquisitions Policy.
- If, at the internal meeting, the artwork(s) are deemed to be unsuitable for acquisition, then an explanatory letter from the Collection Manager will be issued, and the file will be archived in a folder with declined acquisitions by year.
- If, at the Pre-Acquisition internal meeting, the artwork(s) proposed are deemed suitable to be considered for acquisition, then an information sheet is prepared.
- As much as possible, staff will physically view the artwork, including a conservator as necessary. In some cases, the materials being considered will be brought into the museum to be presented to the acquisition board.
- Relevant information on the management of the artwork is sourced by the Collection Department staff in conversation with the artist/artist's agent and the team at PMI. The information gathered includes any additional costs that would be incurred with the acquisition – i.e. equipment, framing, transport, conservation needs, as well as research into the futurity of the artwork in the collection. These are added to the agenda for the next Artistic & Acquisitions sub-committee meeting and circulated to the Committee in advance.
- Proposals are formally presented at an Artistic & Acquisitions sub-committee for consideration, and a decision is made on how to progress.
- If accepted, a letter will be issued by the Collection Manager to confirm the acquisition.
- Artworks and archival material approved by the committee are presented in a written report at the next Board meeting for sign-off by the PMI Board of Trustees
- Where proposals are declined by the Committee, an explanatory letter will be sent by the Collection Manager, and the file will be archived in a folder with declined acquisitions by year.

Priorities for Acquisition

- When assessing possible additions to the Collection, the Museum is not only acquiring for the present but framing the future context for Irish photographic art.
- The highest priority for acquisition is photography by Irish photographic artists or work made in Ireland, which has been shown and supported by the Museum since 1978.
- As the Collection develops, it will complement and support the collecting of artists' photographic works by other relevant institutions, such as the National Gallery of Ireland, Butler Gallery, National Museum of Ireland, IMMA, Limerick City Museum of Art, the Hugh Lane Museum, and other leading arts institutions.
- The Museum will actively seek opportunities to include artists currently being overlooked in other collections.

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- The Museum will aim to represent a broad cross-section of artists, including emerging Irish photographers.

Access Standards

The Museum is developing the Collection in tandem with its application for accreditation under the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (“MSPI”). The Museum has consulted with the MSPI in advance of initiating this Collection. The Museum will ensure that the Collection is developed to professional museum standards. This is managed by a staff member with expertise in collection management and archiving.

Best practice policies and procedures will be implemented to manage, catalogue, and care for the Collection according to museum standards. This, in turn, will increase the Museum’s ability to make it more accessible to the public. The Museum will continue to consult with its External Archival Advisors listed below as the Collection is developed.

The Collection is made available to the public online (read-only low-res files on our website). Selected works are featured in public in-house and touring exhibitions from time to time.

- The Museum is committed to maintaining an archive of all documentation relating to its collections. In doing so, it acknowledges the need for an ethical approach to acquisition and collection management; it is also central to the efficient use of the collection for museum activities.
- All legal instruments of conveyance and warranty of title, signed by a donor setting forth an adequate description of the items involved and the precise conditions of transfer, shall accompany all acquisitions.

Disposal Policy: see the separate policy [here](#)

Winding Up Provision

In the event of the winding up of Photo Museum Ireland, the collection will be donated to a national cultural institution with a similar photography collection.

Policy Review

This Collection Policy will be reviewed annually and will be formally reviewed every five years to ensure its continued relevance and compliance with the Museum Standards Programme of Ireland guidelines.

The following is the structure of the parties involved with the creation, development and maintenance of the Collection:

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Collections Committee Members - Trustees of the Museum:

Tom Burke, Orla Fitzpatrick and Lorraine Tuck

In-House Curators:

Tanya Kiang, Trish Lambe and Darren Campion

Registrar and Collection Care Manager:

Dee Byrne

External Curatorial Advisors:

Photography Sector

Frits Gierstberg, Netherlands Photo Museum;

Tracy Marshall Grant, independent curator / Northern Narratives

Oliver Sears, Oliver Sears Museum, Dublin;

Herman Seidl, Fotohof Galerie & Archive, Salzburg

Pauline Vermare - Curator, writer and photo historian, Brooklyn Museum

External Archival Advisors:

Shirley Clerkin - advisor on sustainable practices;

Caroline Carr - advisor on Museum standards and systems:

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion ("EDI") Advisors

The Museum will invite input from its Equality, Diversity and Inclusion advisors.