

CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY

EXHIBITIONS POLICY

Introduction

This policy is concerned with the entire range of displays created or hosted by the Chester Beatty Library (hereinafter referred to as the Chester Beatty), irrespective of the duration of the display or the number of objects on display. It covers single objects, in-focus displays, temporary exhibitions including loan objects and the displays in the permanent galleries (and circulation areas).

The policy should therefore be read in conjunction with the existing documents: *Statement of Strategy 2016-20*, *Collections Care and Conservation Strategy*, *Loans Policy*, *Collections Policy*, *Learning Policy* and *Customer Charter*.

Purpose and Aims

It is the stated mission of the Chester Beatty to make the Collections available for the use and enjoyment of the public, while a commitment to shared knowledge and accessibility is central to the current strategy.

Public display is the most important means of fulfilling these obligations. All displays should communicate the Chester Beatty's intellectual purpose and mission.

The museum undertakes to display objects for the following purposes:

- i. To promote a wider appreciation and understanding of the international cultural heritage embodied in the Collections.
- ii. To promote learning and enjoyment for all visitors inclusive of race, gender, socio-economic status, language, disability and other social attributes.
- iii. To promote physical access to the Collections by providing suitable facilities for visitors with disabilities and others with specific needs.
- iv. To foster relations between Ireland and the peoples whose cultures are represented in the Collections.
- v. To promote the Chester Beatty locally, nationally and internationally, and to enhance our reputation as one of the finest small museums in the world and as a centre for scholarship
- vi. To promote interaction, co-operation and partnerships with colleagues from other institutions and disciplines, and with the broader community.
- vii. To increase the understanding of and engagement with the Collections
- viii. To make the Collections relevant and accessible to a diverse public, including stakeholders, scholars and educators.

This policy sets out the principles which will determine how objects are selected for display and the standards which will govern this in pursuit of the above aims.

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Principles

- a. Displays must be able to meet the needs of audiences ranging from the casual enquirer to the specialist. Although displays are primarily aimed at the interested adult, they may be accessible on a number of levels. The interpretative texts will be clear and readily understandable.
- b. Each display and gallery will have a particular theme that furthers the purpose and aims set out above. The layout of the display, and the interpretative materials (texts and multi-media support) will illustrate and explain the theme. All texts will be easy to read and multi-media material easy to follow.
- c. The Chester Beatty may display objects with sensitivity to cultural differences and will seek to avoid using material which may, in any way, cause offence to visitors.
- d. Objects will be selected on the basis of their ability to illustrate the diversity of the Collections and the theme of the display in the most attractive and impactful manner.

General Objectives

- a. To rotate objects from the Collections in the two permanent exhibition galleries regularly, as agreed between the Curators and Head of Collections.
- b. To organise temporary exhibitions from the permanent Collections and other sources - national and international – in the temporary exhibition gallery. Exhibitions drawing on outside collections should complement, augment or elucidate the permanent holdings.
- c. To organise and receive travelling exhibitions of a national and international nature.
- d. To organise exhibitions, projects and related activities that encourage direct community involvement and participation. Guest curators may include museologists, artists, academics, architects and partners (representatives) from different sectors of the community.
- e. To comply with international museum standards regarding security, conservation and public safety and ensure compliance with relevant legislation.
- f. To comply with our obligations under the Official Languages Act 2003 by providing general information in the permanent exhibition galleries in two languages (Irish and English)
- g. Temporary exhibitions will normally remain on view for a minimum three-month period though this may vary according to the nature of the display.

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Procedure

- a. The Head of Collections chairs regular Collections meetings. The long-term displays and the rotation of material from the permanent Collections, as well as the programme of temporary exhibitions, are agreed at this forum and approved by the Director.
- b. Proposals for temporary exhibitions are normally made by the curatorial staff.
- c. Proposals may also be made by various stakeholders. These are normally made to the Director or Head of Collections, and are discussed with the relevant curator, before responding.
- d. Normally a two to three year lead in time is required for a temporary exhibition.
- e. Any incoming exhibition should be compiled by a recognised institution, or by person(s) with recognised curatorial abilities.
- f. The Director may stipulate special conditions for an exhibition curated outside the curatorial ambit of the Chester Beatty.

Exhibitions by Contemporary Artists

- a. The Chester Beatty may display works by contemporary artists where there is:
 - i. a clear and direct link between the works and the Collection and where its exhibition may be expected to contribute to public understanding and enjoyment of the museum's Collections.
 - ii. where the work has been commissioned by the Chester Beatty in fulfilment of its mission.
 - iii. where the work has been acquired by the Chester Beatty to add to its Collections.
 - iv. where the work forms part of a group exhibition organised in partnership with the Chester Beatty.
- b. The Chester Beatty will not normally mount exhibitions devoted to the work of a single contemporary artist unless
 - i. the artist is working in a traditional mode closely associated with the Collections of the museum.
 - ii. the works derive clearly from a tradition of interest to the Chester Beatty – claims of inspiration from broad philosophical schools will not satisfy this condition.
 - iii. The Chester Beatty is not a commercial venue and is therefore not available for the purpose of selling works of art.

Public Programming

- a. Curators will work in conjunction with the Education Team in order to deliver a relevant and dynamic public programme to complement exhibitions.
- b. Curators will advise the Education and Membership Officers of activities of interest relating to their Collections that might be of use for programming and/or Volunteer training.
- c. The Education and Membership Officers will co-ordinate public programming in order to maximise the range of events available for both the Public and Friends.
- d. To support the development of tours, the Curators will periodically review the information available for the Volunteers in the Reference Library and update to reflect changes made to the exhibitions and recent publications or research.
- e. The Curator will co-ordinate with the Education Officer to arrange Volunteer training sessions.

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Funding

The funding for temporary displays may come from a variety of sources including the grant from the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and targeted sponsorship.

Approval/Revision History

This Exhibitions Policy is version 1.2, formally approved by the Trustees on 20 February 2019. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Collections Management Team, while a full revision will take place every five years.