

CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY

EXHIBITIONS POLICY

Introduction

This policy is concerned with the entire range of displays created or hosted by the Chester Beatty Library, irrespective of the duration of the display or the number of objects on display. It covers single objects, in-focus displays, temporary displays comprising 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*, *Conditions of Loan*, *Collections Policy* and *Learning Policy*.

Purpose and Aims

It is the stated mission of the Chester Beatty Library to make the Collections available for the use and enjoyment of the public.

Public display is the most important means of fulfilling this obligation. All displays should communicate the Library's intellectual purpose and mission.

The Library 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 irrespective of background, race, nationality, gender, disability or educational attainment.
- iii. To foster relations between Ireland and the peoples whose cultures are represented in the Collections.
- iv. To promote the Chester Beatty Library 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.
- v. To promote interaction, co-operation and partnerships with colleagues from other institutions and disciplines, and with the broader community.
- vi. To increase the understanding of and engagement with the Collections.
- vii. 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 and provide different types of learning resources and different learning styles.
- b. 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.
- c. 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, audio-visual support etc.) will illustrate and explain the theme. All texts will be easy to read and audio-visual material easy to follow.
- d. The Library will display objects with sensitivity to cultural differences and will seek to avoid using material which may, in any way, cause offence to visitors.
- e. 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 and as agreed between the Curators and Head of Collections.
- b. To organise temporary exhibitions from the permanent Collections and other sources - local, 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 local, 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. Temporary displays will normally remain on view for a three-month period though this may vary according to the nature of the display.
- f. To provide general information in the permanent exhibition galleries in two languages (Irish and English).
- g. To comply with accepted museum standards regarding security, conservation and public safety. This applies to receiving, displaying, maintaining and dispatching works of art.

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Procedure

- a. The Director (or 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 displays, are agreed at this forum.
- b. Proposals for temporary displays are normally made by the curatorial staff.
- c. Proposals may also be made by various stakeholders. These are normally made to the Director or curatorial staff. When they are made to the Director, s/he discusses the proposal with the relevant curator, before responding.
- d. Normally a two to three year lead in time is required for a temporary exhibition.
- e. The 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 Library.

Exhibitions by Contemporary Artists

- a. The Library 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 Library's Collections
 - ii. where the work has been commissioned by the Library in fulfilment of its mission
 - iii. where the work has been acquired by the Library to add to its collections
 - iv. the work forms part of a group exhibition organised in partnership with the Library
- b. The Library 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 Library
 - ii. the works derive clearly from a tradition of interest to the Library – claims of inspiration from broad philosophical schools will not satisfy this condition.
- c. The Chester Beatty Library is not a commercial venue and is therefore not available for the purpose of selling works of art.

Programming

- a. Curators will work in conjunction with the Head of Education in order to organise an appropriate public programming that should include some of the following (but is not limited to):
 - i. Public talks
 - ii. Gallery tours (with Curator and/or Volunteers)
 - iii. Film screenings
 - iv. [Art] workshops (for adult and children)
 - v. Musical events
 - vi. Demonstrations
 - vii. Family days
 - viii. Silk Worm Club and Teens Club activities

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- b. The Curator and Education Officer will co-ordinate public programming with the Membership co-ordinator in order to maximise the range of events available for both the Public and Members.
- c. The Curator and Head of Education will co-ordinate with the Education Officer to arrange Volunteer training sessions.
- d. Curators should advise both the Membership and Education Officer of anything of interest relating to their collections that might be of use for programming and/or volunteer training. This includes but may not be limited to:
 - i. Outgoing loans for exhibitions
 - ii. New material on display in the permanent collections
 - iii. Any relevant curatorial publication
 - iv. Any ideas for events or speakers the curator believes to be of interest
- e. Curators will periodically review the Volunteer information Guide 'Tours at the Chester Beatty Library' with relevant information, such as update changes to the exhibitions and recent publications or research.

Funding

- a. Costs associated with the rotation of objects on display in the permanent exhibition galleries are funded from the Conservation or the Exhibition budget.
- b. The funding for temporary displays may come from a variety of sources including the grant-in-aid, and targeted sponsorship.

Approval/Revision History

This Exhibitions Policy is version 1, issued in August 2013 and formally approved by the Trustees on 16 October 2013. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by the Collections Management Team, while a full revision will take place every five years.