

BOARD POLICIES

COWAN and FINE ARTS COLLECTIONS MANAGEMENT

Category: Operational

Approved: June 20, 2007

Revised: March 25, 2015

I. Mission

Cowan Pottery Museum is an integral part of the Rocky River Public Library. To quote from the library board of trustees' Cowan Pottery Museum Policy:

“Cowan Pottery is a cultural asset unique to our community. Produced in Lakewood and Rocky River between 1912 and 1932, the pottery is recognized for its vibrant colors, pioneering work in glazes, and variety of shapes. Because Cowan pottery is a unique expression of local history that is internationally acclaimed, Rocky River Public Library is committed to maintaining, celebrating, and promoting the collection. It is at the core of the library's role as a cultural institution in the community.”

Further, the mission or purpose of the Cowan Pottery Museum (CPM) is to serve as a cultural repository and learning center for the works of R. Guy Cowan and his artistic colleagues and students who comprised the Cowan Pottery Studio (also known as the Cleveland Tile and Pottery Company). This involves acquiring, organizing, preserving, promoting, and celebrating the distinctive art pottery created by the Cowan artists, as well as their related writings and other art works.

The Library Collection consists of the Cowan Pottery Museum Collection of Cowan Pottery and related historical objects and archives, the Fine Art Collection of historic and contemporary works, and the History Collection of photographs, objects, and archives specific to the history of Rocky River Public Library and the city of Rocky River.

II. Acquisitions

Curators may propose exceptional works of art for acquisition to the Library or Cowan collection that significantly enhance the Library and Museum's stated mission. All works should be in, or capable of being returned to, an acceptable state of preservation. The Library must be able to house and care for the proposed acquisition according to generally accepted museum practices.

The primary goals are to maintain and enhance the excellence of the Cowan Pottery Museum and the Library's collection, to collect additional and appropriate art pottery works produced by the Cowan

Pottery Studio of Rocky River between 1920 and late 1931; to continually demonstrate the significance of this collection to Rocky River's history; and to educate and instill appreciation of Cowan Pottery both on a local level and throughout the world via such outreach activities (both real and virtual) as exhibits, tours, and programs.

Secondarily, acquisitions may be made (either through purchase or gift) of outstanding pieces related to the main Cowan era, including but not limited to such items as early pieces made in Lakewood during the period 1912-1917, pieces made by artists associated with Cowan Pottery either before or after the active phases of the Studio, and other types of art works (besides pottery) made by Cowan artists.

New accessions may be made through purchase or by donation. CPM has within the library budget a Cowan Pottery Acquisitions Fund that may be used to acquire new pieces for the collection. All purchase must be approved in advance by the library's board of trustees. New accessions (whether purchased or donated) should conform to the following guidelines:

- New accessions must be related to the Library's mission, goals, and guidelines
- They should not be a duplicate of something already owned (unless the original is damaged).
- There must be proper space and appropriate resources for storing, preserving, and exhibiting the new piece(s).
- The donation must be accompanied by proper provenance and authentication information.
- All new acquisitions must be properly accessioned and entered into the inventory database.

III. Gifts & Donor Recognition

Generally, donations of objects are not accepted [See: Gifts to the Library Policy]. Proposed donations of Cowan pottery, or fine art objects must be evaluated based upon the needs of the Library, the space available, and how well the proposed donation fits within the Library's collection and mission.. The Board of Trustees reserves the right to reject donations of objects. In addition, gifts should be unconditional and nonrestrictive, and should be given with full copyright. In general, long-term loans are unacceptable. The Library does not provide evaluation of gifts for tax or estate purposes. Once given, gifts become the sole property of the Library, which henceforth assumes the responsibility to care for and promote the gift as part of the collection. The Library reserves the right, however, to decide upon the gift's ultimate disposition. Donor names and information shall become a permanent part of the accession record accompanying the donated item(s) and the names shall be listed in the inventory. In addition when donated pieces are used for display or loan purposes, their names shall be noted as dictated by the "credit line" on the Deed of Gift on accompanying ID captions or plaques.

IV. Deaccessioning

From time to time it may become necessary to deaccession (i.e. remove from the collection) items that are deemed not in accordance with the Library's collection policy. The criteria for determining whether an object should be deaccessioned include, but are not limited to, the following (with RRPL Board approval):

- The object is not relevant to the collecting mission of the Library and Cowan Pottery Museum or has little value in the Library's collection.
- The object is redundant or is a duplicate and is not necessary for research or study purposes.
- The object is of lesser quality than other objects of the same type in the collection or about to be acquired.

- The object lacks sufficient aesthetic merit, historical, or art historical importance to warrant retention.
- The Library is ordered to return an object to its original and rightful owner by a court of law; the Library determines that another entity is the rightful owner of the object; or the Library determines that the return of the object is in the best interest of the Library.
- The Library is unable to preserve the object in a responsible manner.
- The object is unduly difficult or impossible to care for or store properly.

Disposal may be accomplished in the following ways (with RRPL Board approval):

- Items may be given to a more appropriate repository
- Items may be auctioned at fair market value
- On rare occasions it may become necessary to dispose of an item, but not before advice of an appropriate outside professional is sought.
- Records must be kept of all deaccession activities

V. Loans

Items in the Library's collection may be loaned (at the discretion of the Curator and Library Director) if the requesting institution has proper insurance and covers the costs of transporting the items. A signed agreement must be administered, including a date for return of items.

VI. Security & Appraisal

Security of the distinctive and valuable collection of the Cowan Pottery Museum and Rocky River Public Library is of utmost concern and merits close attention and improvement when appropriate. The Library insures the permanent collection as well as any objects temporarily on loan. A full appraisal is to be performed every five years (previous appraisals: 1996, 1999, 2007, and 2012). The Curator, the Library Director, and the Fiscal Officer shall work together towards the accomplishment of these goals of up-to-date security and regular appraisal.