

Artefacts Collections Policy

Principles and Procedures

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Olympic decathlon trophy, donated by Czar Nicholas II of Russia.



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Foreword

The purpose of this document is to explain the collections policy, in particular the guiding principles for acquisitions.

1. The heritage mission

The Olympic Museum's mission is to be a key international driving force of Olympism in the field of education and culture. It transmits to the general public, and more specific target audiences, the messages, history, legacy and future challenges of Olympism. It must help enhance the attractiveness of Olympism and the Olympic Games. It must also ensure the efficient running of the Museum site in Lausanne.

It is the International Olympic Committee (IOC)'s centre of competence for:

- acquiring, conserving, managing and making available the collections of artefacts, including numismatic items, philatelic objects and artworks;
- producing and disseminating cultural and educational programmes worldwide;
- sharing its know-how with the rest of the Olympic family.

With regard to collections, The Olympic Museum's main mission is thus to manage the collections which will enable it to perform its mission to promote Olympism.

1.1. History of the Olympic Museum collections

The idea of creating an Olympic museum and studies centre was first mooted by Pierre de Coubertin, the founder of the modern Olympic Games. And within just a few years of moving the IOC headquarters to Lausanne, Pierre de Coubertin had set up at the Villa Mon-Repos an Olympic museum responsible for collecting and preserving the legacy of the Games. It was opened to the public in 1923, and continued to function until 1969. On 23 June 1982, the provisional Olympic Museum was opened on the Avenue Ruchonnet in the centre of Lausanne, and operated until the opening of the present Olympic Museum in Ouchy in 1993. The collections expanded considerably during the decade between 1990 and 2000.

Some of the more notable series include:

- The Pierre de Coubertin collection, which illustrates the many facets of the man who was an athlete, artist, pedagogue, networker and sports leader.
- Artefacts for every edition of the Games since 1896, including those not held in 1916, 1940 and 1944. Many of the emblematic objects are represented, with complete sets of medals, torches and mascots, including the rare one from the Mexico City 1968 Games.
- The IOC historical collection, with unique objects like the Olympic flag presented in 1914 and the Olympic Cup.
- Sports equipment and clothing worn, used or signed by Olympians.
- A large collection of official, advertising, cinema and other Olympic posters.
- A rich collection of opening and closing ceremony costumes.
- The collections of various IOC Presidents and members, including the diverse collections of Lord Killanin and Juan Antonio Samaranch.



- The Juan Antonio Samaranch Olympic philately collection, composed of blocks of four.
- The Centennial Coin Collection, which illustrates how five mints around the world worked together to create a consistent programme to celebrate the Olympic centenary. The series features coins, preliminary sketches and the tools used.
- Collections which illustrate the history of the Olympic Movement in general, and the relations between the IOC, the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) and the International Federations in particular, with objects linked to candidatures, regional games, NOCs, etc. All the regions of the world are represented, which makes this a unique collection.
- The Centennial Olympic Suite, composed of 50 works by internationally renowned artists, including Carmelo Arden Quin, Ben, César, Dennis Oppenheim, Mimmo Paladino, Antoni Tapiès and Zao Wou Ki.
- Equipment showing the evolution of sports and the sports industry.

2. Olympic Museum Collection acquisitions

To be included in the Olympic Museum Collection, objects acquired must be in line with The Olympic Museum's goals, which are to create and safeguard Olympic patrimony and develop cultural and educational projects.

Each acquisition must therefore be considered beforehand and comply with the following criteria.

- The object is in line with the collecting definition, which sets out the Olympic Museum's acquisition priorities. Whether modest or prestigious, it must form part of a whole, help to enrich a demonstration and advance the state of knowledge in the field of Olympism. It must be of documentary, historic or cultural value.
- The Olympic Museum is able to keep the object in good conditions without it endangering any other collection objects.
- Acquisition of the object is not subject to conditions that The Olympic Museum cannot or does not wish to accept.
- The object is in good condition or can be restored without adversely affecting the Olympic Museum budget.
- The object is accompanied by sufficient information to allow it to be identified, so that it is possible to document it and place it in its historical context.
- If it is not a certified copy, the authenticity of the object may reasonably be established.
- The provenance of the object may be established, so that, if necessary, The Olympic Museum can check that its transfer is not in breach of the applicable rules of the law or professional ethics.

2.1. Purchases

Acquisition by purchasing should be envisaged only for what the collecting definition considers to be priority categories. For other cases, justification for such a purchase must be given, and only after other possible solutions have been considered (loan or deposit).



Any purchase must be assessed by the Curator beforehand.

Any seller must be prepared to provide The Olympic Museum with all the information concerning the object, its provenance and history. The seller must also be able to guarantee its authenticity or formally express any reservations. A written purchase contract validated by the Legal Affairs Department must be signed with any seller.

Purchases below USD 500 (five hundred) may be decided within the institution by the Museum Director. For amounts higher than this, the Olympic Museum's supervisory body – i.e. the Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Olympic Museum Foundation, or his representative – must be consulted and authorise the purchase.

For amounts greater than USD 10,000 (ten thousand), any purchases from a person must be paid for upon receipt of the object. A down payment may be made at the seller's request, but this must never be more than 40 per cent of the purchase price.

If necessary, The Olympic Museum will place the seller in contact with independent experts or reference sources so that they can determine the correct market value.

2.2. Donations

The Olympic Museum reserves the right to refuse objects which do not meet the criteria set out in this acquisitions policy, or which are supernumerary under the terms of the collecting definition.

Acquisitions must be accompanied by documentation, and The Olympic Museum reserves the right to refuse an object if the information needed to identify or authenticate it is missing.

The Olympic Museum is not obliged to display objects received.

Potential donors will be informed of the above conditions before making any transfer.

2.3. Exchanges

Acquisitions by exchange should be envisaged only for what the collecting definition considers to be priority categories and in return for objects which do not correspond to the criteria established by the collecting definition or which are supernumerary.

Any exchange must be assessed by the Curator beforehand.

Wherever possible, exchanges with other patrimonial institutions are preferred.

2.4. Objects received on loan

Loans must not be accepted or displayed if their origin is not documented or if their educational, scientific or intellectual interest is not in line with The Olympic Museum's objectives.

Deposits are the subject of a written contract. The Museum undertakes to ensure proper conservation of the objects entrusted to it, following the same quality standards as for The Olympic Museum collections.

An object received on loan may be transformed into a donation or purchased, with the agreement of the lender and with all the usual information.



2.5. Refusals

The Olympic Museum develops its collections in line with its financial and logistical abilities, with a view to adding consistently to its collections. For this reasons, every object acquired must come within the framework established by The Olympic Museum.

If an object does not correspond to the standards defined above, and particularly if the object is insufficiently documented for its identification, provenance and state of conservation to be determined, The Olympic Museum may refuse or return the object, specifying the date of return and the reason for the refusal.

In the event of a refusal, the Collections Manager will endeavour to direct the potential donor to a patrimonial institution whose collecting mission corresponds more closely to the object offered.

2.6. Assessment

The Olympic Museum may ask for estimates with a view to insuring its collections. An estimate of the financial value of other objects may be given only in response to an official request – from other museums or legal authorities, government bodies or other public authorities competent to do so.

To address the problem of fakes, The Olympic Museum has put in place an internal control procedure which allows it to establish the authenticity of the artefacts offered to it.

In addition, The Olympic Museum is in contact with its partners (members of the Olympic Museums Network, Collectors Commission) in order to exchange information on known fakes.

3. Priorities

Based on the gaps highlighted by comparing the Olympic Museum Collection as it ought to be, under the terms of the collecting definition, and the current state of the collections, most of the financial means and exploration are focused on the following object categories:

- Rare torches and winners' medals, with the idea of having at least two complete sets.
- Sports equipment of pre-1984 Olympians, with priority on the equipment of medallists and athletes illustrating the Olympic values.
- Pre-1964 athlete uniforms and pre-1988 ceremony costumes.
- Artefacts from the first Games of the modern era, Athens 1896, and the first Olympic Winter Games, Chamonix 1924. To a lesser extent, this effort will also be made for the following editions: Paris 1900, St Louis 1904, London 1908, Antwerp 1920, Rome 1960, St Moritz 1928, Lake Placid 1932, Garmisch-Partenkirchen 1936, Oslo 1952, Cortina 1956 and Innsbruck 1964.
- Prize-winning works of art from the Olympic art competitions, provided that the prizes correspond to the call numbers of the artists in question
- Objects linked to presidents Demetrius Vikelas and Avery Brundage, but taking into account the resources of the other IOC sections and other institutions around the world, and provided the objects relate to key moments in the history of the Olympic Movement.

In addition, during and after each edition of the Games, The Olympic Museum's collecting priorities are:

- Emblematic objects: winners' medals, official posters, mascots and also winners' diplomas, which serve as models when they have to be reproduced or used for reallocation purposes



- Athletes' equipment, with priority given to champions, medallists and athletes illustrating the Olympic values (heroes and role models)
- Objects recalling key points of each edition of the Games to illustrate the following subjects: the Olympic values, ceremonies, Olympic legacy and promotion of the host country culture, architecture and sustainable development, design and fashion, and advances in technology.

4. Processing acquisitions

4.1. Documentation

The recording and documentation of the collections using the appropriate standards is an important professional obligation. It is particularly important that such documentation include a description of all the objects, their provenance and their origin, as well as the conditions under which they came to The Museum. The data on the collections must be kept up to date and added to wherever possible.

The artefacts which comply with the collecting definition are inventoried in the MuseumPlus system, which includes photographic documentation.

4.2. Conservation

One of The Olympic Museum's obligations is to ensure satisfactory protection and conservation of the collections. The aim is to ensure that they are handed on to future generations in the best possible state of conservation, within the limits of The Olympic Museum's resources and the state of knowledge in the field. Priority is given to preventive conservation, which includes the following measures:

- Packaging and storage which are adapted wherever possible to suite the type of object and the materials of which it is composed
- Controlled climate conditions and exposure to light

These aspects are taken into account by the collections manager before a purchase proposal is submitted to the Curator.

4.3. Loans to other bodies

Loans must not be authorised if the third parties requesting them are unable to guarantee the minimum conditions, in particular regarding conservation and security, as defined in the loans procedure, or if they do not have an educational, scientific or intellectual vocation in line with The Olympic Museum's objectives. In addition, objects should not be loaned to individuals for their personal use.

5. Transfers

New acquisitions are added to The Olympic Museum's collections on a long-term basis rather than for eventual transfer, except for objects of documentary value (objects reserved for study or tests) or those acquired for a specific museographical project (demonstration items, teaching kit). In such cases, their transfer or elimination must follow a written procedure.

The Olympic Museum is not looking to have an exhaustive collection in all categories. As a result, it may make selections before acquiring objects. If such selection is not possible, The Olympic Museum reserves the right to sort through objects before eliminating, giving away, exchanging or storing them. Before adopting this procedure, the following four points must be taken into consideration:



- The object no longer corresponds to the missions of The Olympic Museum. It is no longer of any patrimonial, museographical or documentary interest to the institution.
- The condition of the object means that The Museum cannot conserve it properly.
- Disposal of the object is in line with The Museum's acquisitions policy. The richness and consistency of the collections will not be affected by the disposal.
- The object is supernumerary (in the case of objects produced in series) and its disposal will not compromise the balance of the collections.

Deaccessioning may be given careful consideration, with priority given to transfers to other museums. Sales are not prohibited, but the monies or advantages obtained from the sale of artefacts from The Olympic Museum's collections must be used solely for the benefit of the collections, and normally for new acquisitions.

6. Reference Document

The International Council of Museums Code of Ethics is the point of reference and guide for those implementing the collections policy.

7. Revision

The collections policy is a living document, which needs to be reassessed and, if necessary, revised at regular intervals, in principle at the same time as the collecting definition, namely every eight years (two Olympiads). Proposals are made by the Collections Manager to the Olympic Museum Director. The options are validated by the Executive Committee of the Olympic Museum Foundation.



8. Annex

8.1. Glossary

These definitions are based on the standards of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), the United Nations Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) and the Canadian Museums Association (CMA).

Disposal: withdrawal by an institution of an artefact from its collection. External disposal: artefact transferred by sale, donation or exchange. Internal disposal: artefact stolen, disappeared or destroyed, which is no longer identifiable or is impossible to restore.

Acquisition: obtaining legal ownership of an artefact by purchase, donation, bequest or exchange.

Purchase: acquisition of an artefact in return for a sum of money. Each purchase concerns an artefact or batch of artefacts transferred by a seller (corporate body or individual) on a given date.

Artefact: cultural object produced by humans, in contrast to ecofacts formed by nature. Artefacts created or transformed by human hand represent a tangible response to a human need and are characterised by their materials, manufacture, origin, function and value.

Supervisory authority: people or organisations defined in the official legal texts of the museum as being responsible for its ongoing existence, strategic development and funding.

Collection: a series of natural or cultural (i.e. manmade) objects and intellectual property directly owned by the institution, to be used for the exclusive purposes of preservation, research and presentation to the public.

Packaging: packaging and storage operation using the appropriate materials with a view to creating a microclimate to ensure the optimum conservation and protection conditions for a cultural object.

Collecting definition: an Olympic Museum internal document defining the themes and sub-themes covered by The Olympic Museum collection, its strengths and weaknesses and the selection criteria within each theme.

Deposit: contract whereby a person or institution entrusts an item to another person or institution, which undertakes to hold the item for a certain length of time and return it to the lender.

Documentation: records in any form, (written, electronic, graphic, audio etc.) that relate to museum collections in any way. These will include primary, (often original) registration records of legal title, source, provenance, condition, physical description, standards of care required by the community of origin, etc., as well as secondary records relating to changes, events and research concerning collections.

Donation: 1) action of transferring ownership of an object to a person or institution free of charge. 2) item donated.

Donation contract: contract whereby the donor irrevocably hands over the item donated to the donee who accepts it.

Exchange: contract whereby the parties respectively transfer ownership of an object other than a sum of money.

Fair market value: generally signifies the highest price that an object would fetch in a sale between two willing people acting prudently, knowledgeably and independently. It is based chiefly on an analysis of the sales of comparable items with a view to establishing the highest value that the item could achieve, within a reasonable time frame, on the free market.



Accepted professional standards: set of documents and practices established by consensus and approved by a recognised body, which provides, for common and repeated use, rules, guidelines or characteristics for activities or their results, ensuring an optimum level of order in a given context.

Loan: contract whereby a person or institution makes an object available to another to be used for a specified period of time.

Acquisitions policy: reference document, adopted and reviewed by the management bodies of a museum institution, which serves as a basis for all professional decisions and recommendations on the acquisition, conservation and management of collections.

Provenance: the full history and ownership of an artefact, including its property rights, from the time of its discovery or creation, from which authenticity and ownership are determined.