

KILDARE COUNTY COUNCIL'S MUNICIPAL ART COLLECTION - COLLECTIONS POLICY

(including Purchasing & Donations)

1. INTRODUCTION

Kildare County Council's Municipal Art Collection was established through the Architects Department in the 1970s, led by County Architect Niall Meagher. To enhance the collection, the County Council availed of The Arts Council Joint Purchase Scheme, an incentive for the local authority to purchase contemporary artworks from emerging artists. Acquisitions during that period include Evie Hone, Patrick Pye, Patrick Collins, Charles Brady, Seán McSweeney, Robert Ballagh, Norah McGuinness. In 1999 Kildare County Council established an Arts Service which took the County Municipal Art Collection within its remit. The Arts Service advocates for, and supports the development, exhibition, and care of the Municipal Art Collection on behalf of the local authority.

"In Perpetual Motion: An Arts Strategy for Kildare County Council / Straitéis Ealaíon do Chomhairle Contae Chill Dara 2023 – 2027", has identified the following strategic priorities:

- Art for People and Place
- Support for Artists
- Reimagined Space for Art
- Sustaining Arts through Strategic Partnerships
- An Enhanced Arts Service for County Kildare

The Arts Service continues to identify and develop opportunities for the Collection to be seen in public spaces across the county. It is our belief that supporting artists enriches opportunities for public engagement in the arts.

Kildare County Council's Municipal Art Collection is a permanent working art collection and includes artworks purchased, commissioned and/or donated to the local authority that are managed by the Arts Service, overseen by the Municipal Art Collection Committee.

To date, the Municipal Art Collection consists mainly of small to medium-scale two-dimensional work, mostly paintings and prints. The Collection also includes sculpture, photography and multi-media by local and national artists, lending to a strong sense of identity.

Kildare County Council will continue to add to the Municipal Art Collection and consider works in any media. The Kildare Municipal Art Collection is a mechanism to generate critical debate on arts and culture. New acquisitions should extend and challenge our knowledge and understanding of works already represented in the Collection, as well as developing and enriching existing and new contexts, by increasing representation of certain artists, styles, genres, and media. The Collection will respond to and reflect narratives and themes within contemporary Irish society.

The ambition for acquiring new work for the Collection should be to include them in public displays of the Collection. In the past, artworks have been purchased for / commissioned by Kildare County Council with specific locations in mind, usually libraries, and on occasion library spaces for children. However, some work can only be displayed in certain contexts or periodically displayed due to their material condition. These works are of equal importance in the Collection as those on permanent / semi-permanent public display.

2. OUTREACH AND EDUCATION

The presence of art in public buildings across the county brings art into the everyday lives of citizens. The Collection has the potential to ignite imagination, spark conversation and evoke response. By encouraging people to engage with the Collection, it is the County Council's intention to support Art for People and Place, Support Artists and supports the arts in Ireland. Recent activity (2024) to place the Municipal Art Collection in public spaces includes Naas Library & Cultural Centre including catalogue and the inclusion of the Collection in the 3D walkthrough of the library; Kildare Community Library including a catalogue; Gallows Hill Civic Amenity Centre, Athy; MERITS Innovation Thinkspace, Naas.

A web-based listing of works in the Municipal Art Collection is available to that contextualises the work in social history, but also in terms of art movements or

influences. While the information is aimed at second and third level Visual Art students, it has a broad appeal.

3. PRIORITIES FOR ACQUISITION

Priorities for acquisition change over time and according to the needs of the collection. The Committee should not compromise on the type of work and/or artist at the expense of strategically developing the Collection. When assessing possible acquisitions for the Kildare County Municipal Art Collection, the County Council is acquiring both for the present and shaping the context for the Collection into the future, considering its place in the National Collection.

Support for artists is a key criterion for considering work to be added to the Municipal Art Collection. Kildare County Council commissions and acquires works by artists at different stages of their careers. Acquisitions for Kildare County Council's Municipal Art Collection will continue to be sourced from artists in three categories: Professional Visual Artists; Emerging Visual Artists; Artists from Diverse Backgrounds.

3.1. Professional Visual Artists

- Professional Visual Artists, born or living in Ireland, North and South.
- Professional Visual Artists from or living in Co Kildare and its environs.
- Artists whose early/ previous work already features in the Municipal Art Collection.

For the purposes of this policy, 'professional' artists, is considered any artist who fulfils three or more of the professional status criteria listed below, as defined by Visual Arts Ireland.

- Holds a degree or diploma from a recognised third level college in Fine Art or an Associated Visual Arts Discipline.
- Has had a one-person visual arts show(s) (including time-based events) in a publicly funded visual arts space.
- Has participated in a visual arts exhibition/event which was selected by a jury in which professional artists or recognised curators participated.
- Has visual artwork purchased by Government, local authority, museum, or corporate client for inclusion in a recognised collection.
- Has been commissioned by Government, local authority, museum, or corporate client for inclusion in a recognised collection.
- Has been awarded a bursary, residency, materials grant or otherwise grant aided by the Arts Council/An Comhairle Ealaíon, Arts Council of Northern Ireland or other funding body.

- Has been awarded tax-exempt status by the Revenue Commissioners or are on schedule D as a self-employed artist in Northern Ireland.

3.2. Emerging Artists

Artists who do not yet fulfil the criteria for professional status, but whose work is deemed of significance to Kildare County Council's Municipal Art Collection, including recent Fine Art graduates and emerging artists from, or living in County Kildare.

3.3. Artists from Diverse Backgrounds

Kildare County Council is committed to ensuring that the Municipal Art Collection better represents contemporary Irish society. In acquiring new work, the Committee will seek to ensure that the Collection includes artists from all areas of the community regardless of gender, sexual orientation, civil or family status, religion, age, disability, race or membership of the Traveller Community, or socio-economic background.

The Committee will prioritise, as appropriate, acquisitions that represent the lived experience of all citizens of County Kildare, including work from artists from diverse backgrounds and artists from new communities.

4. CONSIDERATIONS

Considerations when assessing artwork to acquire for the Municipal Art Collection:

- 4.1. Work must be of high quality and artistic ambition.
- 4.2. Work that reflects contemporary visual arts practice including new media and new technologies.
- 4.3. Work that demonstrates an important stage in an artist's practice, considering artists at all points of a career.
- 4.4. Work that extends and challenges our knowledge and understanding of works already represented in the Collection, as well as developing and enriching existing and new contexts.
- 4.5. Investing in the work of significant artists from / living in Kildare.
- 4.6. Investing in the work of established artists working or living in Ireland with a national and international reputation.
- 4.7. Revisiting artists whose early work features in the Collection and who have since gained a reputation in the arts world.
- 4.8. Gender balance across the Collection.

5. METHOD OF ACQUISITION

Kildare County Council acquires work by purchase, and on occasion donation. The County Council currently has limited resources to allocate to acquisitions. A judicious policy of continuing acquisition remains a core objective of the Arts Service. Acquisitions are overseen by the Municipal Art Collection Committee.

The Committee will consist of the Chairperson of the Strategic Policy Committee for Local Community and Culture, County Librarian, County Arts Officer, a representative from Finance Department and an independent artist.

Members of the Committee are representative of a diverse range of experiences and expertise to ensure a wide range of approaches to the consideration of artists and practices.

Kildare County Council Arts Service provides knowledge in this area, attends galleries, and events and engages with colleagues locally, regionally and nationally to gain further insight in the context of the national arts landscape. Potential acquisitions are presented by the Arts Service team before progressing recommendation(s) to the MAC Committee.

The Committee meets at regular intervals during the year (minimum 2 meetings), to consider, discuss and approve acquisitions.

6. SOURCES OF ACQUISITION

Artworks will be acquired through a variety of procurement processes. These include Direct Invitation or Purchase; Limited Competition; Open competition; Community Engagement in Selecting Artworks

6.1. Direct Invitation or Purchase

Direct Invitation: The Municipal Art Collection Committee may directly appoint an artist to a commission. Where it is felt, after a period of research and discussion, that an artist's practice or work is absolutely and exclusively appropriate to the aims and objectives of the commission, the Municipal Art Collection Committee, working with curators and/or advisors where required, can appoint an artist directly to a commission or to work with a given budget.

Purchase: Work can be purchased directly from an artist, artists' collectives, or representative. When using this process, selection should be made based on as comprehensive as possible a survey of what is available.

6.2. Limited Competition

For commissions or opportunities of a very exacting nature, the route of shortlisting a panel of suitable artists is carefully researched, with external advice as required, and approved by the Municipal Art Collection Committee. The option is also available to Commissioners to assign a selector with specialist expertise to shortlist and appoint artists to work on commissions.

Through a limited competition process, artists carry out research and development and are given adequate time to prepare and submit their proposal.

Shortlisted artists are paid a fee to develop and submit ideas for selection. This process is useful whereby the commissioning body, through the research and advice of the Municipal Art Collection Committee, wants to work with a particular type of art or artist. It is noted that the fee paid to the artist at this stage is not likely to be sufficient to enable the artist to guarantee the budgets or technical specifications he/she/they are proposing. Developmental and collaborative projects may require additional time for discussion, collaboration, or negotiation with stakeholders to establish the direction or context of the project.

6.3. Open Competition

There are a variety of ways by which artists can submit through publicly advertised open competition:

6.3.1. *A combination of slides and CV submitted alongside drawings and/or maquette, outline project ideas and costings.*

With this method of procurement, sufficient time must be allowed for artists to negotiate the place and people with which the project will engage. This may include research, site visits and liaison time.

6.3.2. *Competition based on previous work.*

The submission of slides, catalogues, published material, videos, CDs etc. along with the artist's current CV to an expert selection panel.

6.3.3. *Open Anonymous Competition*

This model aims to ensure that emerging or unknown artists have a chance to be selected for commissions. The selection panel does not have access to supporting material on the artist, and the decision to select is made based on the quality of the idea presented and the execution of the submission.

In the case of each of the above methods, a shortlist may be drawn up and a fee paid to the shortlisted artists to undertake further research and development and develop proposals before a final selection is made.

6.4. Community Engagement in selecting Artworks

Building on success of the *Making Marks with Markievicz* project (2020) where a facilitating artist and community group recommended the purchase of two artworks for the Kildare Municipal Art Collection, and the *Kildare Covid Hero Project* (2020) where local heroes were nominated to have their portrait painted for inclusion in the Collection, there is scope to further develop mechanisms for individuals and communities from county Kildare to actively engage with the acquisition of new artworks. In this process, a comprehensive open call to community groups to creatively engage will be drawn up and an experienced professional artist / curator must facilitate.

7. LENDING POLICY

From time to time, Kildare County Council will augment its Collection by the inclusion of artworks on loan from other organisations or individuals. The council is committed to providing suitable conditions for artworks on loan during transportation, storage, and display.

By request, Kildare County Council may make artworks available on loan to other organisations. Details of a loan agreement will be agreed in advance by both parties.

8. DONATIONS POLICY

The County Council can also make acquisitions by other means, principally gifts or bequest. To maintain standards within the overall Municipal Art Collection, artworks that are submitted for donation to the Collection should be subject to the same assessment as artwork examined with a view to purchase.

9. SCHEDULE OF ARTWORKS

Kildare County Council will maintain an up-to-date schedule of artworks in its Collection.

10. MAINTENANCE OF ARTWORKS

Kildare County Council is committed to the ongoing maintenance, preservation, cleaning, and restoration of the Municipal Collection.

11. SECURITY

One of the intentions of the Municipal Art Collection is that it will be on display for the enjoyment of the public. Every precaution should be taken to ensure the artwork's safety. Where possible, artworks will be displayed in highly visible areas, using security fixings. In some instances, highly valuable works, or works of particular significance, will only be displayed in restricted areas, or may be displayed from time to time, when the security can be guaranteed.

12. INSURANCE SCHEDULE

Each artwork is included in Kildare County Council's insurance schedule. The artworks will be revalued at appropriate times by professionals in this field.

13. REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed with Arts Service staff and the Committee at regular intervals. Following 3 years of operation, a full review of the policy will be brought to the Strategic Policy Committee for consideration (2028).

April 2025

SELECTED TIMELINE

1970s: Kildare County Council's Municipal Art Collection established. Led by County Architect Niall Meagher, Architects Department.

1970s: Arts Council Joint Purchase Scheme supported the purchase of works incl Evie Hone, Patrick Pye, Patrick Collins, Charlie Brady, Seán McSweeney, Robert Ballagh, Norah McGuinness.

1999: Arts Service established. Municipal Collection falls within its remit.

2005: Cleaning, restoration, cataloguing and valuation programme.

2015: Municipal Art Purchasing Policy approved by the Local, Urban and Rural Development (LURD) Strategic Policy Group and the Corporate Policy Group.

2020 – 2022: audit of the collection.

2022: (Feb): reviewed Municipal Art Collection Purchasing & Donations Policy presented for review by the Economic, Community & Cultural Development Strategic Policy Group.

2023: Kildare's County Arts Strategy published (2023 – 2027).

2024: valuation by Jane Beattie, Advisor and Valuer.

2025: presentation of reviewed Collections (Purchasing & Donations) Policy to the Local Community, Cultural and Integration Strategic Policy Committee (8th May 2025).

Approved.