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Care of Collections			DFAC-2026-05	

Purpose

The Douglas Family Art Centre (the “DFAC”), as part of The Muse, holds its collections in trust for the public. This Policy establishes governance-level direction and minimum standards for the long-term care, preservation, conservation, and safe use of artworks in the DFAC’s Permanent Collection and in its custody on loan.

1. This Policy supports the DFAC’s *Collections Management Policy* (DFAC-01-02) and has been developed to strengthen the DFAC’s capacity to preserve art works and cultural property over the long term and make it accessible to the public through exhibitions, programs, research, and publications.
2. This Policy applies to all DFAC staff, volunteers, contractors, interns, and any other persons who handle, transport, install, store, conserve, or otherwise work with artworks in the DFAC’s custody, including incoming and outgoing loans.
3. This Policy is a ‘what and why’ document. Detailed ‘how’ procedures (e.g., handling protocols, environmental monitoring procedures, light exposure tracking, and emergency response checklists) are maintained separately as internal working documents and are reviewed and updated as needed.

Definitions:

- A. **Board:** refers to The Muse Board of Directors.
- B. **Director:** refers to the Director of The Muse.
- C. **Curator:** refers to the Curator of the Douglas Family Art Centre or their delegate.
- D. **Collection:** All accessioned artworks, loans (incoming and outgoing), and items under DFAC custody.
- E. **Artwork:** refers to cultural property in the class of Objects of Fine Art, including (but not limited to) paintings, drawings, prints, photographs, sculpture, and mixed-media works that are part of the Collection or in the DFAC's custody on loan.
- F. **Preventive conservation:** refers to measures that reduce risk of deterioration and damage through suitable environments, safe handling, storage, security, and maintenance, rather than interventive treatment.
- G. **Conservation treatment:** refers to interventive actions undertaken to stabilize, repair, or otherwise preserve an artwork, and are documented and performed by qualified personnel.

Authority and accountability:

- 4. The Board approves this Policy and ensures adequate resources are allocated for its implementation.
- 5. The Director is accountable for implementation of this Policy, including ensuring that appropriate facilities, staffing, training, contracts, and budgets are in place.
- 6. The Curator is responsible for the day-to-day application of professional standards for collections care, including environmental monitoring, handling, storage, exhibition preparation, and, in consultation with the Director, initiating conservation action.
- 7. All staff and volunteers share responsibility to follow approved handling, security, and emergency procedures and to report any incident, loss, suspected theft, pest activity, or change in condition of an art work immediately.

Policy:

- 8. In all collections care activities, the DFAC will meet professional standards and ethical obligations, comply with applicable laws, and maintain the public trust in its stewardship of cultural property.
- 9. The DFAC will prioritize preventive conservation as the primary means of preservation, recognizing that preventing deterioration is preferable to interventive treatment.

10. Staff will not work outside of, or beyond, their training in the conservation of collections.
11. The DFAC will apply a risk management approach to collections care, focusing on the most significant and likely risks (including physical forces, fire, water, pests, theft/vandalism, and environmental hazards).
12. The DFAC will balance conservation with access by providing public and research access in ways that do not place artworks at unacceptable risk.

Environmental management:

13. The DFAC will provide stable environmental conditions in exhibition galleries, storage areas, and any other spaces where artworks are stored or handled. The environmental conditions will be monitored and controlled by the Building Automated System (BAS).
14. Environmental controls will address temperature, relative humidity (RH), light (visible and ultraviolet), airborne pollutants/particulates, and water intrusion risks.
15. Environmental monitoring will be conducted year-round. A seven day average of temperature and humidity will be generated on the BAS every day by the Director or designate to identify trends, anomalies, and required corrective actions. Records of the previous month's environmental conditions will be automatically generated by the BAS on the first day of the month, and emailed to the Director, Curator and City of Kenora Facilities staff for review. These records will be retained for not less than seven years.
16. The DFAC will monitor and manage illumination (lux) and ultraviolet radiation in display and storage areas where light-sensitive materials are present, and will take steps to reduce unnecessary exposure (including the use of UV-filtering strategies where appropriate).
17. When building-wide control cannot achieve desired conditions, the DFAC will employ microclimate solutions (e.g., sealed frames, display cases, enclosures, and appropriate packaging) to reduce risk to sensitive works.
18. Environmental targets and allowable variation, including light exposure targets for light-sensitive works, will be set in internal standards informed by collection needs, historical conditions, and sustainability considerations.

Security and access control:

19. The DFAC will maintain physical and procedural security measures to protect the Collection and loans against theft, vandalism, and unauthorized access as outlined in *DFAC-01-04 Security Policy*.
20. Access to vault and back-of-house collection areas will be restricted to authorized personnel. Guest and contractor access will be supervised by DFAC staff or City of Kenora Facilities staff.
21. Keys, access codes, and alarm credentials will be issued, tracked, and revoked in accordance with DFAC security procedures.
22. Any suspected theft, loss, or security breach will be reported immediately to the Director and Curator, documented as an incident, and managed in accordance with insurance, legal, and police reporting requirements.

Storage, housekeeping, and pest management:

23. Artworks will be stored using appropriate systems that provide physical support, separation, and protection from dust, light, pests, and physical impact.
24. Storage furniture, mounts, and enclosures will be selected to reduce risk of abrasion, deformation, and chemical damage.
25. Housekeeping and maintenance practices will reduce dust and debris and will be coordinated to avoid introducing risks (e.g., excess moisture, chemicals, or vibration).
26. The DFAC will implement an Integrated Pest Management (IPM) approach based on prevention, monitoring, identification, and non-chemical response whenever necessary.
27. New acquisitions and incoming loans will be assessed for pest risk and, where appropriate, quarantined or treated before entering collection storage.
28. There is to be no eating or drinking in the vicinity of artwork in storage, include no food or drink at any time in the vault.
29. Only archival-safe materials will be used in the packing and storage of collection items.

Handling, installation, and movement:

30. Artworks are at their most vulnerable when being handled. Handling will be minimized and undertaken only by trained personnel using appropriate supports and personal protective measures.
31. The Curator will ensure best practice standards are met in the methods and conditions under which the following activities occur vis-à-vis artworks:
 - A. display and providing study access;
 - B. installation and de-installation;
 - C. exhibition lighting;
 - D. matting and framing;
 - E. transportation to or from the DFAC; and
 - F. storage.
32. Handling methods will be appropriate to the artwork's materials, condition, and any cultural protocols, including for sacred or culturally sensitive works.
33. Any damage, change in condition, or near-miss event observed during handling or installation will be reported immediately and documented in the condition report.
34. Access to galleries during periods of exhibition installation will be limited to staff or volunteers whose presence is essential.

Packing and transport:

35. Packing and transport will be planned to mitigate risks from shock, vibration, puncture/impact, compression, water, pollutants, pests, and incorrect temperature/RH.
36. Condition reporting (pre-move and post-move) will be completed for all outgoing and incoming loans and for any internal moves that present material risk.
37. The Curator will decide what mode of transportation is appropriate for loaned items. Transport methods are matched to object vulnerability, lender requirements, and risk assessment. Some options for shipping include:
 - A. Fine Art Shipper;
 - B. Personal Delivery by Curator or designate;

- C. Private courier;
- D. Canada Post (or other postal service); and
- E. Freight shipping company.

Exhibition and display:

38. Exhibition design will incorporate preventive conservation requirements including light management, physical security, safe mounts, vibration control, and safe visitor circulation.
39. Light damage is cumulative and irreversible for many materials. The DFAC will manage both intensity and duration of exposure, and will avoid unnecessary lighting (for example, by turning off or reducing lights when spaces are closed or when objects are not being viewed).
40. For photographs, works on paper, and other light-sensitive media, the DFAC will apply stricter controls on light levels and exposure duration, including the use of rotations, limited display periods, and the use of appropriate glazing or UV-filtering strategies where applicable.
41. Display cases, frames, and mounts will be constructed from materials suitable for long-term display to reduce off-gassing and physical stress.
42. The DFAC will monitor and document the condition of artworks on display and will adjust display duration, rotation schedules, or environmental controls as required.
43. Works not on exhibit will be stored in appropriate enclosures and in conditions that minimize light exposure.

Conservation assessment and treatment:

44. The Curator is responsible for initiating any conservation action on an artwork. Such work will not be undertaken without consultation with the Director.
45. Conservation treatment will be performed only by qualified conservators or appropriately supervised personnel. Treatment decisions will be based on examination, documentation, and the goal of maintaining the artwork's physical, historical, and aesthetic integrity.
46. All conservation examinations and treatments will be documented, including the methods and materials used, and retained as part of the artwork's permanent record maintained in collections management database.

47. The DFAC will not undertake conservation treatment that creates unnecessary risk to the art work, and will prefer minimal, reversible interventions whenever feasible.

Emergency preparedness and response:

48. All staff will work in accordance with the Douglas Family Art Centre Emergency and Disaster Plan for business continuity or emergency procedures.
49. Emergency preparedness for collections will include planning for prevention measures, staff roles, training, supplies, and a prioritized salvage plan for the most vulnerable and most significant works.
50. In the event of an incident (e.g., water leak, fire, smoke, theft, vandalism, pest outbreak, or mould), staff will prioritize human safety, isolate risks, protect artworks where safe to do so, and notify the Curator and Director immediately.
51. Emergency incidents affecting artworks will be documented and followed by a post-incident review to reduce recurrence.

Training and competency:

52. All permanent staff involved in collections work will maintain an appropriate level of training for handling and preventive conservation. Temporary staff, contractors, and volunteers will be trained and supervised to the appropriate level by DFAC staff.
53. Training will include safe handling, exhibition lighting awareness for light-sensitive works (including photographs and works on paper), emergency response, security procedures, hazard awareness (e.g., mould and pests), and documentation expectations.

Records and reporting:

54. Environmental monitoring logs, including where applicable illumination and UV measurements, condition reports, incident reports, conservation reports, pest monitoring logs, and related maintenance records will be retained as part of the DFAC's collections records system.
55. Records will support accountability, risk management, and continuous improvement and will be made available for designation, audit, and reporting purposes as required.

Review:

56. This Policy shall be presented by the Director to the Board for review at a minimum of every three years, or sooner if required by significant changes to facilities, staffing, collections scope, or risk profile.