

# The Museum of Modern Art

## Museum Archives

### Manuscript Collections Collection Development Policy

This collection development policy refers *exclusively* to manuscript collecting from non-MoMA sources. Please see the Museum Archives Policy statement for additional information regarding the institutional archives and the Records Management Program.

#### Background of Manuscript Collections in the Museum Archives

The Museum of Modern Art Archives was formally established in 1989 by resolution of the Board of Trustees and under the auspices of the Museum's General Counsel to organize, preserve, and make accessible the Museum's historical documents and primary resources, as well as to collect primary source material relevant to the work of the institution. In order to ensure the preservation of relevant institutional documentation, the Museum Archives created and directs the Museum's Records Management Program. In 1995 the administrative oversight of the Museum Archives shifted from the General Counsel to the Education and Research Support division. In 1998, with the transfer of primary source materials from the Library's special collections, the Museum Archives expanded its mission, becoming a repository of manuscript collections as well. The placement of the manuscript collections under the auspices of the Museum Archives is part of the Museum's effort to consolidate and preserve primary source research materials, reflecting the institution's mission to sustain "a library, archives, and conservation laboratory that are recognized as international centers of research." Accessible to both Museum staff and the public, the Museum Archives is an international center of research for the study of modern and contemporary art.

#### Definitions of Manuscript Collections

The manuscript collections of the Museum Archives fall into four categories:

- Personal papers and records of individuals;
- Records of organizations, businesses, movements, and voluntary associations;
- Accumulations of manuscript material pertaining to a single theme, person, event, or type of record;
- Individual manuscripts (such materials are sought by the Museum Archives when they build on existing strengths and add to documentation for which the Museum Archives already has comprehensive holdings).

#### Scope of the Collections

The Museum Archives Manuscript Collections consist of materials generated by organizations or individuals important to the history of art from the late nineteenth-century to the present that reflect the Museum's collections and programming. These collections consist of primary source material, including correspondence, typescripts, reports, research materials, photographs, financial records, scrapbooks, diaries, annotated books, audio-visual recordings, press clippings and printed ephemera. Currently, the majority of manuscript collections in the Museum Archives are in English, with a few in German, French and Russian. In addition, the majority of the material is from North America and Europe, with a small amount from Latin America. The manuscript collections exist to support, supplement, and complement programs of research, education, and scholarship at the Museum.

### Criteria for New Acquisitions

Every potential acquisition of manuscript material will undergo rigorous scrutiny, with close consideration given to the following guidelines:

- The material directly addresses the history of modern and contemporary art as it relates to the work and the broadly defined mission of the Museum.
- The manuscripts reflect and complement the Museum's mission of establishing, preserving, and documenting a permanent collection of the highest order and of education about the vitality, complexity, and unfolding patterns of modern and contemporary art and culture. Specifically, the papers of prominent artists, architects, designers, dealers, critics, scholars, art historians, arts organizations, or galleries that document the development of modern art as defined by this Museum, would be relevant.
- The collection will serve the Museum Archives' primary audience of Museum curators and staff. In addition, it will generate broadly based research interest among those studying the visual arts from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century.
- The chronological boundaries of the materials coincide with the period covered by the Museum's art collections, that is roughly 1840 to the present.
- As the Museum's Film Study Center is currently responsible for film material, documents related to cinema, video, and related film media will not be collected. This policy may be revised in the future.
- The items have a global art-historical importance. The Museum Archives is not the appropriate repository for items of strictly regional or U. S. interest.
- The collections are of a stable media (i.e., the Museum Archives does not accession electronic records at this time).
- The Museum Archives will have sole ownership over the materials, even if the copyright resides elsewhere. The Museum Archives, however, consistently requests that the donor of a collection of papers transfer the copyright interests in the collection to the Museum. This is specified in the Deed of Gift. In addition, the Museum Archives will only accept collections that are free from access restrictions imposed by the donor. The materials will be accessible to the Museum staff and public under the current access guidelines of the Museum Archives (see the Museum Archives Access Policy for additional information).
- Expenses related to the arrangement, description and preservation of collections should be minimal or offset through donations, which will be solicited at the time of the gift or purchase of the related materials.
- The potential impact on Museum Archives staff and facilities will be measured when considering new acquisitions.
- The primary collecting scope will be materials in English, Spanish, French and German, from North America, South America, and Europe; this does not exclude collecting of materials in any other language or from any other geographical area.

As part of the review process, the Museum Archives will work closely with curatorial staff, as appropriate.

The Museum Archives will also make every effort to work collaboratively with other manuscript collecting repositories. In addition, it will direct potential donors to the most suitable institution, if the collection is not germane to its holdings.

Other documents are available that relate to the holdings, acquisition policies, principles, and procedures of the Museum Archives. These include the Museum Archives Mission Statement, Policy Statement, List of Holdings, Deed of Gift Form, Records Management Procedures, Access Policy, Photocopy Policy and Permission to Publish Application.

May 2001