



**OPW** Oifig na  
nOibreacha Poiblí  
Office of Public Works

# OPW State Art Collection Collection Policy

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## Version and Amendment Table

The following table outlines changes made to this document.

Date	Version	Amendment
17 February 2021	Original release	

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# 1. Background

Established in 1831, the Office of Public Works (OPW) predates the foundation of the Irish State and is a Government office that manages the largest and most diverse property portfolio across Ireland, ranging from heritage sites to contemporary office spaces. It provides accommodation for Government Departments, over 700 Garda properties and approximately 550 offices in both historic and modern buildings. It delivers new construction, refurbishment, fit-out, conservation and maintenance projects on behalf of the State. The OPW is also the lead agency for coordinating a whole-of-government response to flood risk management in Ireland. It is responsible for coordinating comprehensive policies and strategies to minimise the impacts of flooding through sustainable planning.

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## 2. Governance

This policy regulates the acquisition of items to the OPW State Art Collection. The collection is managed by the Art Management Office. The Art Management Office reports to the Commissioner with responsibility for Heritage and Building Services. Its policies are governed by the Art Management Group, an internal advisory committee of the OPW's Management Board.

### 2.1. The Art Management Office

The OPW provides clients with access to artworks for display in their properties from the State Art Collection. This collection is managed and maintained by the OPW's Art Management Office. It is a diverse collection of artworks, representative of a wide range of artistic media by numerous artists at different stages in their careers. It is a working collection with over 90 per cent of artworks on display in public buildings.

### 2.2. Role of Art Management Office

- Implementation of the Government's Per Cent for Art Scheme.
- Acquisition of artworks and commissioning art projects for display in OPW-managed properties.
- Strategic management and maintenance of the State Art Collection.
- Management of an up-to-date inventory of the State Art Collection.
- Provision of advice on art and management of cultural projects on behalf of the Government as requested.
- Collaboration with arts organisations, local authorities and other relevant bodies to support the arts nationally and internationally.
- Assist and advise OPW colleagues on art-related initiatives and projects.
- Create public awareness of the collection through exhibitions and publications.
- Valuation of gifts of artworks for Government Departments as requested.

The Art Management Office commissions art projects and purchases artworks through the Government's Per Cent for Art Scheme. For details of this Scheme, see [Section 9](#) below (Acquisition Procedures).

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## 3. Collection

The OPW State Art Collection is a working art collection and includes artworks purchased, commissioned, inherited by or donated to the State that are managed by the OPW Art Management Office. At present, the collection numbers over 13,500 works of art.

The majority of works of art in the collection are by contemporary Irish artists, but not exclusively. The collection includes paintings, drawings, original prints, watercolours, sculpture, textiles, photographs as well as multi-media works and art projects commissioned under the Per Cent for Art Scheme.

Although the artworks in the collection are widely dispersed and mobile, some works have a strong connection with the building in which they are displayed. For example, the collection includes bronze busts and portraits of Presidents, Taoisigh and Cinn Comhairle commissioned by the OPW for display in Áras an Uachtaráin, Government Buildings and Leinster House respectively. In other cases, artworks were commissioned for a particular space and form an integral part of the building or its surroundings.

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## 4. Collection Criteria

The OPW State Art Collection is displayed across a diverse range of internal and external spaces, in light-filled office buildings as well as older buildings with more traditional interiors; in garden and park settings and on paved forecourts and courtyards. As the function of the collection differs from that of a museum, there are some limitations on the nature of arts projects that can be initiated and artistic media that can be acquired, but the breadth of the OPW's capital portfolio does allow for a variety of project scales across art forms.

There are two key qualitative criteria applied to commissions and acquisitions: artistic integrity and technical excellence. These criteria apply across art forms. Other factors vary and may include context, relevance, display environment and geographical location.

The OPW commissions and acquires works by artists at different stages in their careers, from recent graduates to established artists. Artworks are purchased mainly from exhibitions, artists' collectives and studios.

Artworks are selected by the Art Adviser and the Collection Management team.

Art projects are managed by the Art Management Office in collaboration with the OPW project team. Projects are managed through best practice principles set out in [National Guidelines on Public Art](#).<sup>1</sup>

The presence of art in work environments and the public realm brings art into the everyday lives of people who visit and work in these spaces. By encouraging people to engage with contemporary art, it is the OPW's intention to implement Government initiatives that support the arts in Ireland.

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. *Public Art: Per Cent for Art Scheme: General National Guidelines – 2004*. [https://publicart.ie/fileadmin/user\\_upload/PDF\\_Folder/Public\\_Art\\_Per\\_Cent\\_for\\_Art.pdf](https://publicart.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/PDF_Folder/Public_Art_Per_Cent_for_Art.pdf).

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## 5. Limitations on Future Collecting

The OPW recognises the need to provide adequate, continuing care and documentation for the artworks in its care and to facilitate their use for display in State buildings. Limitations on future collecting may be imposed by, among other factors, reduced resources, reduced display or storage capacity, and the suitability of works available.

The Art Management Office will make every effort to ensure that artworks and decorative objects are acquired for the OPW State Art Collection only where there is evidence that the current holder of the item is legitimately entitled to transfer title and that the item has not been acquired in, or exported from, its country of origin in violation of that country's laws (for the purposes of this paragraph, "country of origin" includes Ireland).



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## **6. Collecting Policies of Other Museums**

The OPW State Art Collection aims to avoid duplication with other collections in the care of the OPW, notably collections in the OPW's National Historic Properties and National Monuments sections.

The OPW State Art Collection also takes into account the collecting policies of other cultural institutions and organisations in Ireland and consults with them where conflicts of interest may arise due to the acquisition of works with similar or related subjects.

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## 7. Commitments and Responsibilities in Respect of the OPW State Art Collection

**Documentation and archiving:** All artworks coming into and leaving the OPW State Art Collection are properly recorded and documented in the OPW's online collections database, a password-protected online asset management database hosted by Axiell, as well as on paper in object entry and object exit forms.

**Conservation:** Collections Management staff in the Art Management Office regularly survey the collection and arrange for appropriate repair and conservation of items as required. Conservation projects are undertaken by external conservators drawn down from specialist panels. Projects are undertaken on the basis of priorities including budget availability; prevention of deterioration; repair of damage and general on-going maintenance. Per Cent for Art commission contracts specify that artists shall provide the OPW with the necessary information in relation to the future maintenance of the work.

**Security:** The collection held in the OPW State Art Collection's storage facilities is protected against damage or theft. In line with [Circular 19/1996](#), it is the responsibility of client Departments to ensure the safety of artworks on loan to them. For auditing purposes, Collections Management staff in the Art Management Office carry out regular surveys of items of public art and artworks on loan to client Departments.

**Research, publication, public access and interpretation:** Researchers are afforded all reasonable access to material and archives relating to the OPW State Art Collection and the publication of images and information from the collection in suitable books, periodicals, documentaries, etc. is facilitated wherever possible by the Art Management Office. Members of the public have the opportunity to engage with the collection in various ways: site-specific public artworks may be accessible in their outdoor location, while visual art and decorative objects from the OPW State Art Collection can be seen on display in State buildings open to the public and at annually curated exhibitions with changing themes in different locations across Ireland. The latter are accompanied by suitable interpretation material such as catalogues. In addition to this, the OPW State Art Collection is documented in published collection catalogues.

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## 8. Acquisition Policy

The Art Management Office pursues an active acquisition policy through two main channels: purchasing visual art and decorative objects and commissioning art projects across a range of media for the OPW State Art Collection. With the exception of commissions undertaken on behalf of the Government mentioned in [section 8.2.2](#) below, funding for both activities derives from the Per Cent for Art Scheme operated by the OPW in all its major capital construction projects.

As set out in [Public Art: Per Cent for Art Scheme: General National Guidelines \(2004\)](#) pooling of Per Cent for Art funding is utilised by the Art Management Office to allow flexibility in the use of funds and to ensure that a range of artworks are available to meet a diverse range of client requirements.

### 8.1 Purchasing

The OPW Art Adviser ensures that all artworks acquired for the OPW State Art Collection meet the criteria of the Collection Policy. Decisions to purchase artworks under the Per Cent for Art Scheme are further informed by the following considerations:

- The work of local artists is considered when purchasing for State buildings. A survey of what is available from local galleries and artists will be undertaken by the Art Adviser, or one of the Collection Management team, who may consult with the local Arts Officer, where necessary.
- The range of media for acquisition may be restricted by environmental conditions (e.g. light levels, technical requirements for display, etc.).
- Historic paintings for or with a connection to a specific location are purchased where circumstances arise and where funding is available, following consultation with OPW heritage sections or external client Departments.
- Works by artists at early stages of their careers, including recent graduates, are considered and acquired.

### 8.2 Commissioning

The Art Management Office manages the commissioning of art projects according to the guidelines for the implementation of the Per Cent for Art Scheme set out in [Public Art: Per Cent for Art Scheme: General National Guidelines \(2004\)](#). These guidelines outline best practice principles for public art procurement and for successfully managing the integration of an artistic dimension into a capital construction project: from planning stage, through selection, research and development, to its realisation and subsequent review. See [section 9.3](#) below for the commissioning procedures followed.

### **8.2.1 APPLIED ARTWORK/DESIGN FEATURES**

Artworks or design features that form an integral part of a building should be included within the capital project building contract by the project team and as such are accounted for within the building contract budget. Examples include lighting, windows, water features or gates designed by in-house project design team. If such artworks or design features are to be commissioned from an artist, the Art Management Office can manage the commission under the Per Cent for Art guidelines.

### **8.2.2 COMMISSIONS OUTSIDE THE PER CENT FOR ART SCHEME**

From time to time, the Art Management Office undertakes special commissioning projects on behalf of the Government. These projects are funded on an individual basis as they arise outside of the Per Cent for Art Scheme. They include the commissioning of painted portraits and bronze busts of Presidents, Taoisigh and Cinn Comhairle for the OPW State Art Collection.

## **8.3 Other Means of Acquisition**

### **8.3.1 GIFTS**

Gifts of artworks may be accepted subject to the normal statutory requirements under the State Property Act, 1954 in regard to Ministerial and Government approvals.

### **8.3.3 LOANS**

From time to time, artworks are offered on loan to the OPW State Art Collection for location in State buildings. Such offers are considered by the Art Management Office and if accepted, a loan agreement is signed and insurance arranged. It is recommended that legal and financial advice be obtained by the lender on the provision of loans to State bodies.

Loans of artworks from the OPW State Art Collection outside the OPW's property management portfolio are also granted in certain circumstances, for example, to an artist, gallery or institution wishing to include a particular work (or works) in an exhibition. Such loans are subject to a formal loan agreement outlining the loan terms and conditions. For example, borrowers will be required to cover the costs of transport, professional art handlers and nail-to-nail insurance for the duration of the loan.

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## 9. Acquisition Procedures

### 9.1 Roles and Responsibilities in the Acquisition Process

The **Art Management Group** ensures that the Art Management Office's procurement process for the expenditure of the Per Cent for Art Scheme budget is fair, open, transparent and accountable. It monitors compliance with the Government's guidelines outlined in [Public Art: Per Cent for Art Scheme \(2004\)](#).

The **Art Adviser** is responsible for approving proposed art projects and for the purchase of artworks with Per Cent for Art funding.

The **Art Management Office** is responsible for project managing the commissioning process as outlined in [section 9.3](#) below.

The OPW State Art Collection **Registrar** is responsible for recording all acquisitions and commissions on the OPW's online collections database.

**OPW Financial Services** record artworks acquired for the OPW State Art Collection and valued over €10,000 on the OPW Asset Register in accordance with [DPER Circular 21/2020](#).

The **OPW Project Architect/Project Engineer** in charge of the relevant capital project is responsible for including an art element in the project plan as part of the Per Cent for Art provision. The approximate amount available for art will be clear from the Sketch Scheme Stage.

The **Project Architect/Project Engineer** should submit a written proposal to proceed with an art project to the Art Management Office to ensure that projects are managed in line with the National Guidelines and fully documented. No commitment should be made to an artist or gallery prior to receiving the Art Management Office's approval. Art Management staff can advise on how to develop and write a proposal for an art project.

The **Project Architect/Project Engineer** should consult the client Department/building users in relation to the delivery of art projects for their location and should consider location, building use and client Department's role when developing proposals for the art project. Close consultation with the client will establish if the client's requirements would best be met by the purchase or commission of artworks. Public consultation may also be required in certain cases and this can be undertaken with the advice of the local Arts Officer. The Art Management Office can arrange liaison with a local Arts Officer.

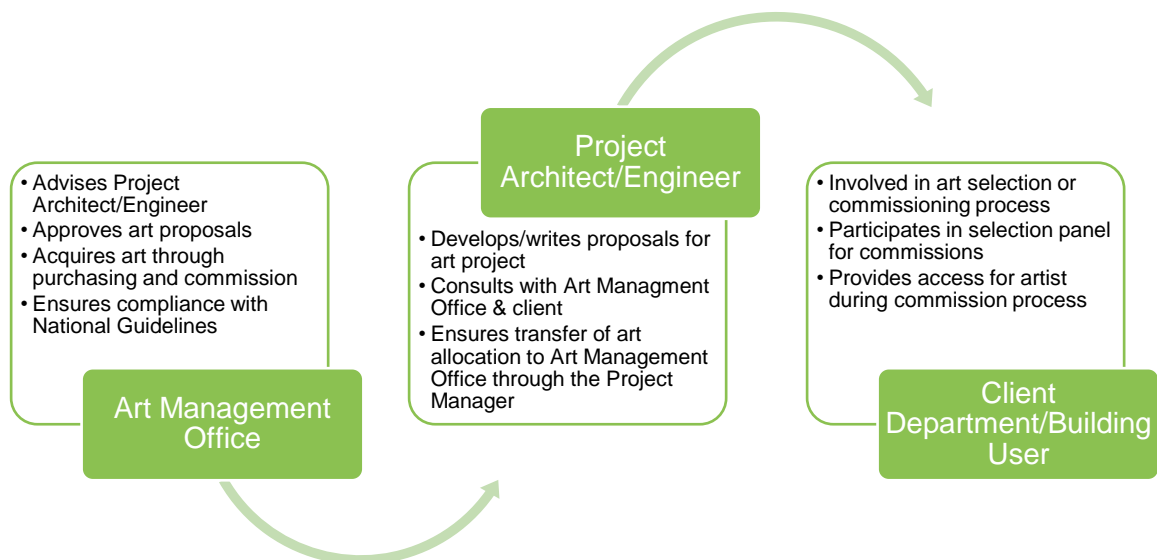


Figure 1: Roles and responsibilities in the implementation of the Per Cent for Art Scheme

## 9.2 Procedures for Purchasing

- 9.2.1 The Project Architect/Engineer meets with Art Management staff to discuss options for the project, enabling the Architect/Engineer to then draw up proposals following consultation with the client. Proposals should be emailed to [artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie).
- 9.2.2 It is essential that the Project Architect/Engineer submits a proposal for the purchase of artworks to the Art Management Office prior to making any commitment to a gallery or artist. This ensures that the acquisition of new artworks meets the criteria set out in this policy and that new acquisitions will be recorded properly both on the OPW State Art Collection's asset management system and in the Asset Register to meet the OPW's responsibilities under [DPER Circular 21/2020](#).
- 9.2.3 When a consultant architect is involved in the management of a construction project, it is the responsibility of the Project Architect/Engineer to ensure that the consultant architect is aware of, and complies with, these acquisition policies and procedures.
- 9.2.4 The building users should be encouraged by the Project Architect to participate in decisions regarding Per Cent for Art acquisitions for their building.
- 9.2.5 Once the Art Adviser has approved a proposal for the acquisition of artworks, the Project Architect/Engineer should advise the Art Management Office of the relevant

supplier details so it can issue a purchase order number. Details should be emailed to [artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie).

- 9.2.6 All certified quotations/invoices for artworks should be sent to the Art Management Office for processing of purchase orders and should include the following details: project sub-head, project title, the intended location of the artwork, title of the artwork, medium and the artist's name. This will allow preliminary information to be included on the OPW State Art Collection's collection management system.

### 9.3 Procedures for Commissioning

- 9.3.1 The Art Management Office must be informed of all intended art commissions, irrespective of costs, so it can advise on the appropriate commissioning process under the National Guidelines (e.g. open competition, limited competition or by direct invitation). Each project will be assessed on a case-by-case basis dependent on location, project budget, artistic medium, etc.
- 9.3.2 The OPW Project Architect/Engineer should consult with the Art Management Office at the commencement of the capital project (or a minimum of 12-15 months prior to the programmed practical completion). It is important to allow sufficient time for the development of a successful art project from initial planning through to completion stage. In general, the commission should allow for a project timeframe of a minimum of six months following the selection of the artist(s). The purpose of good planning and adequate timeframes is to ensure that the final art project is undertaken to the highest standards and allows the artist(s) appropriate time to develop and deliver the art project.
- 9.3.3 It is also essential that the client Department/building user is consulted prior to the commissioning of an art project. For commissions in relation to Flood Management projects, the Art Management Office will consult with relevant stakeholders such as the local authorities.
- 9.3.4 The Per Cent for Art Scheme budget must take into account costs such as
- 9.3.4.1 funding available to the selected artist(s) for the commissioned art project to cover all costs for the art project such as artist's fee, material costs, transport costs, insurances, technical consultants, H&S surveys, method statements, photography, documentation, and any additional site works, as required;
  - 9.3.4.2 fees to be paid to short-listed artists;
  - 9.3.4.3 fees and expenses due to members of the Selection Panel and cultural specialists such as a project coordinator or producer (in line with Arts Council's stated fees for panellists);
  - 9.3.4.4 contingency to allow for other costs or attendances that may be necessary in relation to the commission.

### 9.3.1 COMMISSIONING ART PROJECTS COSTING MORE THAN €25,000

Formal competitive procedures apply to the commissioning of art projects costing more than €25,000. This involves the setting up of a Commissioning Group and a Selection Panel. The process is managed by the Art Management Office as follows:

- 9.3.1.1 In consultation with the Project Architect/Engineer, a Commissioning Group is set up, consisting of the Project Architect/Engineer, a representative from the client Department/building user and the Art Management Office's project manager.
- 9.3.1.2 The Art Management Office's project manager draws up a short-list of artists in consultation with members of the Commissioning Group as well as with the relevant cultural body, depending on the project (i.e. The Arts Council, Visual Artists Ireland, IMMA, the National Sculpture Factory, the Crafts Council of Ireland, the Contemporary Music Centre or Poetry Ireland). The Commissioning Group may also involve the local Arts Officer in the consultation process.
- 9.3.1.3 The criteria for selecting the short-list of artists for a particular commission generally refer to the nature of the art project, geographical location, artist's track record, and the commission budget.
- 9.3.1.4 The briefing document and letter of invitation are prepared by the Art Management Office's project manager with technical information and background material provided by the Project Architect/Engineer and in consultation with members of the Commissioning Group. The briefing document comprises:
  - 9.3.1.4.1 the background and/or history of the building or project;
  - 9.3.1.4.2 a general description of the capital project or the refurbishment works and a description of the proposed location (if physical art form);
  - 9.3.1.4.3 scaled drawings of the space (where relevant to art form);
  - 9.3.1.4.4 the total value of the commission, including VAT;
  - 9.3.1.4.5 the aspects for which the artist will be responsible;
  - 9.3.1.4.6 the number of attendances to be supplied by the artist(s) and their team on site;
  - 9.3.1.4.7 a timetable of the key dates which includes: issue of letters of invitation; site visit; submission of application; submission fee; placing of commission; proposed completion of art project/installation;
  - 9.3.1.4.8 the make-up of the Selection Panel.
- 9.3.1.5 The briefing document and letter of invitation are issued to the short-listed artists by the Art Management Office's project manager. The letter of invitation states that a current tax clearance certificate is required for the award of the commission.
- 9.3.1.6 A Selection Panel is formed and consists of:



- 9.3.1.6.1 the Project Architect/Engineer for technical advice;
  - 9.3.1.6.2 nominee(s) of The Arts Council or other relevant cultural body (minimum 1 or 2 people);
  - 9.3.1.6.3 nominee(s) of the client Department/building user (maximum of 3 people);
  - 9.3.1.6.4 a representative of the Art Management Office who chairs the Panel;
  - 9.3.1.6.5 the Art Management Office's project manager, who minutes the meeting of the Selection Panel and acts as Registrar for the artists' submissions
- 9.3.1.7 The Selection Panel meets to assess the submissions and to recommend a proposal for commissioning. The Selection Panel confirms that the submissions meet the requirements set out in the briefing document, so that the submission fee may be paid. The submission fee currently paid to each artist is a minimum fee of €750, which can be increased depending on the cost involved in the submission.
- 9.3.1.8 The Selection Panel makes a recommendation to the Commissioning Group from the submissions received.
- 9.3.1.9 The Commissioning Group awards the commission and the Art Management Office issues a formal letter of commission. The unsuccessful artists are also informed in writing that the commission has been awarded.
- 9.3.1.10 The selected artist is introduced to the Project Architect/Engineer and client contact. If the strategy is for an art project to be physically integrated into the building or structure, the process should be timed while the building contractor is still on site. Members of the Design Team should be available to the artist to advise on items such as lighting, foundations, structural loading and other matters as necessary for the satisfactory installation of the commission.
- 9.3.1.11 The Project Architect/Engineer should keep in regular contact with the artist while the art project is in progress, so that all technical and safety aspects can be considered and modifications made if necessary. This will also ensure that progress of the art project is in accordance with the timescale and specifications set out in the contract, and that payments to the artist can be verified. The Art Management Office will forward invoices to the Project Architect/Engineer for certification.
- 9.3.1.12 A payment schedule is agreed with the artist at the outset of the commission. All invoices are sent to the Art Management Office for processing.
- 9.3.1.13 The Art Management Office's project manager advises the Collections Management Team as soon as the art project is complete and supplies all information necessary for the correct cataloguing of the commission in OPW Collections, the online collection management system.
- 9.3.1.14 The Art Management Office's project manager ensures that the artist provides two photographs or other relevant documentation in relation to the completed art project for cataloguing purposes.

### **9.3.2 COMMISSIONING ART PROJECTS COSTING LESS THAN €25,000**

A formal Commissioning Group/Selection Panel is not set up for projects costing less than €25,000. The process is managed by the Art Management Office's project manager as follows:

- 9.3.2.1 A short-list of artists is drawn up by the Art Management Office in consultation with the Project Architect/Engineer which takes into account the suitability of the proposed art form and the geographical connection of artists to the site.
- 9.3.2.2 The advice of the local Arts Officer and/or a relevant cultural body may be sought for the creation of a short-list of artists working in an art form appropriate to the commission.
- 9.3.2.3 The Art Management Office, in consultation with the Project Architect/Engineer, manages the selection process. Art Management staff issue a formal letter of commission to the selected artist which includes a briefing document setting out responsibilities, financial arrangements and timeframes.

### **9.3.3 COMMISSIONING ART PROJECTS BY DIRECT INVITATION**

Commission by direct invitation is a procurement mechanism that can be considered on an individual project basis where the suitability of a particular art form or the work of an individual artist(s) is uniquely relevant to specific project requirements. Once the commission is awarded to a specific artist(s), a commission by direct invitation must comply with all the relevant administrative procedures that are outlined above in relation to certification, H&S compliance, insurances, etc.

The direct invitation procedure is managed as follows:

- 9.3.3.1 The aim of the procurement process is the creation or acquisition of a unique work of art or artistic performance.
- 9.3.3.2 The Art Management Office's project manager may seek advice of the arts organisation/cultural body relevant to the art form and from the local Arts Officer.
- 9.3.3.3 The Art Management Office, in consultation with the Project Architect/Engineer of the capital project, may directly appoint an artist to a commission if – following research, discussion and considering other commissioning options – it is deemed that an artist's practice or art form is uniquely appropriate to the aims and objectives of the commission.
- 9.3.3.4 The Art Adviser must approve direct invitation commissions prior to progressing the project with an individual artist(s).

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## 10. Review

This Collection Policy will be discussed by the Art Management Office on an annual basis. It will be reviewed by the Art Management Group and published at least once every five years. The next full review date is noted on the cover.