



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

# The OPW State Art Collection Information for Borrowers in Client Departments

Version 1, February 2021

OPW State Art Collection  
Art Management Office  
Office of Public Works  
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## Version and amendment table

The following table outlines changes made to this document.

<b>Date</b>	<b>Version</b>	<b>Amendment</b>
17 February 2021	Original release	

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# 1. What is the OPW State Art Collection?

The Office of Public Works (OPW) manages the largest and most diverse property portfolio across Ireland, ranging from heritage sites to contemporary office spaces. It has responsibility for the procurement, management and maintenance of accommodation for central Government Departments and agencies. It delivers new construction, refurbishment, fit-out, conservation and maintenance projects on behalf of the State. The OPW provides clients with access to artworks from the OPW State Art Collection which can be borrowed for display in their properties. 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. In this way, the OPW State Art Collection plays a key role in supporting artists in Ireland, promoting contemporary Irish art and stimulating engagement with art in public settings as envisioned by the Government's Per Cent for Art Scheme.

Today, the OPW State Art Collection includes more than 13,500 artworks purchased, commissioned, inherited by or donated to the State. The majority of works of art in the collection are by contemporary Irish artists, though not exclusively, and showcase the vibrancy of the arts in Ireland across a wide range of media: from paintings, drawings, original prints, and watercolours to sculpture, textiles, photographs, as well as multi-media works, music (composition and performances), poetry and applied art such as fountains or mosaics.

While the collection is eclectic, 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, Leinster House and Government Buildings respectively. In other cases, artworks were commissioned for a particular space and form an integral part of the building or its surroundings.

The OPW State Art Collection is a working collection with over 90 per cent of artworks on display in over 400 State buildings across Ireland: in civil service Departments and Government agencies, in courts and Garda stations, in garden and park settings, on paved

forecourts and in courtyards. Outside these official settings, works from the OPW State Art Collection can be viewed in changing exhibitions each year, including in an annual touring exhibition organised in partnership with the civil service art collection managed by the Department of Finance in Northern Ireland.

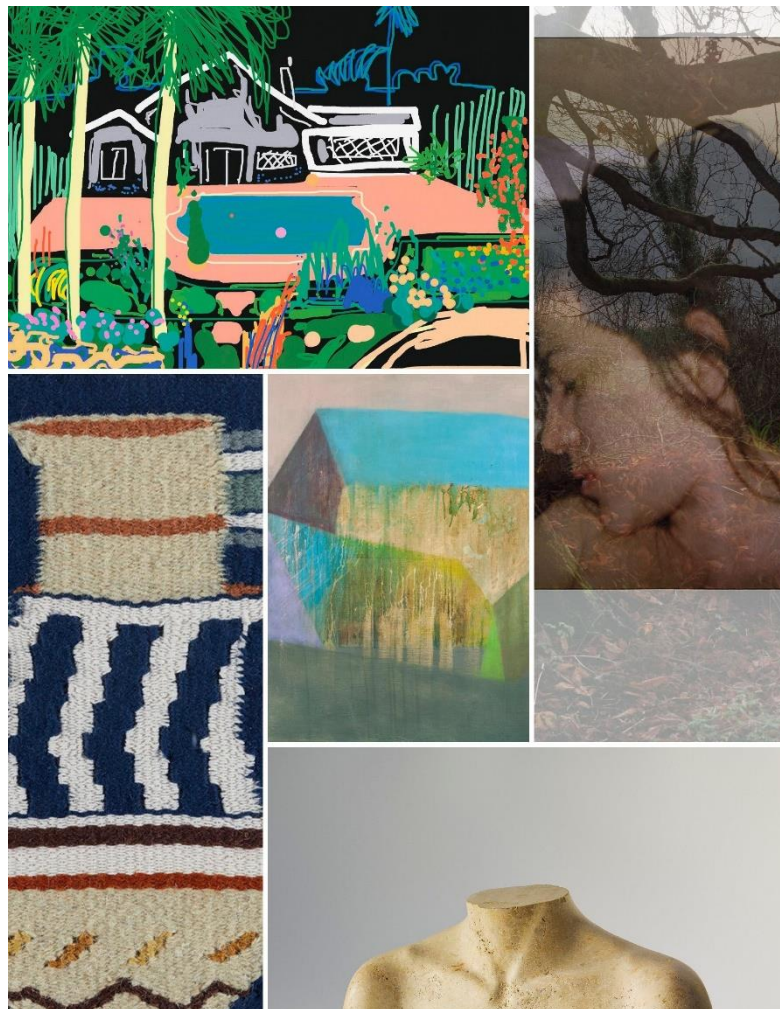


Figure 1: A selection of artworks in different media from the OPW State Art Collection (clockwise from top left: Paul James Kearney, *San Diego I*; Dragana Jurisic, *Dreaming of ...* (detail); Jason Ellis, *Luxembourg Rose*; Gillian Freedman, *Juggling About* (detail); centre: Tom Climent, *Encampment* (detail))

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## 2. Where does the funding for the OPW State Art Collection come from?

Funding for commissioning art projects and purchasing artworks for the OPW State Art Collection comes from the OPW's application of the Per Cent for Art Scheme in all its capital projects. Although the collection itself predates the Scheme and includes historic artworks from public buildings maintained by the OPW since its inception in 1831, it grew substantially after 1978. That year, the OPW began to allocate one per cent of capital construction costs of any building project it executed to acquiring works of art in order to meet a growing desire for enhancing public spaces and Government offices with artworks.

In 1997, the Per Cent for Art Scheme became Government policy and was extended to all Departments with construction budgets with the proviso of certain spending bands and limits. Since 2004, when the Government published [Public Art: Per Cent for Art Scheme: General National Guidelines](#), all public bodies delivering capital construction projects have been required to allocate one per cent of construction costs to funding artistic projects, with the proviso of certain spending bands and limits. In 2019, the Government announced that the funding limits that had been in place since 1997 would be raised, thereby significantly increasing the budgets available for investment in public art and artists in Ireland.

The new limits and bands for Per Cent for Art funding, applicable from 1 January 2020, are as follows:

Proposed project cost band	Proposed maximum limit
Projects below €5m	1% of the cost of the project to a maximum of €50,000 (1% of upper limit)
Projects between €5m and €20m	1% of the cost of the project to a maximum of €125,000 (1% at median)
Projects between €20m and €50m	1% of the cost of the project to a maximum of €350,000 (1% at median)
Projects in excess of €50m	€500,000 (1% of the lower level scale and declining as projects increase in scale)

In line with the [National Guidelines](#), the OPW may pool funding for projects to facilitate greater flexibility in the use of funds.

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### 3. What are the collection criteria?

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, art fairs, 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](#) and in the [OPW State Art Collection Policy](#).

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## 4. Who can borrow from the OPW State Art Collection?

Client Departments in OPW-managed properties can borrow artworks from the OPW State Art Collection for display in their premises, subject to availability and waiting times. Artworks can be provided for reception areas, communal areas, meeting rooms, offices of senior personnel and Ministers.

Any requests for, or in relation to, art loans must be made by client Departments to the OPW Art Management Office through their Facilities Management/Corporate Services Sections.

We have compiled a handy checklist for clients prior to submitting a loan request which you can find [here](#).

The Art Management Office may consider loan requests from State agencies that are not located in an OPW-managed building, depending on the functions of the agency and the suitability of the office spaces in terms of environmental conditions and security. Such requests are managed on a case-by-case basis by the Art Registrar. Email your request with information about your organisation to [artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie).



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## 5. How do I borrow art from the collection?

Take a look at our [checklist](#) prior to submitting a loan request and consider the questions we ask of potential borrowers so you can judge if your premises are suitable and ready for installing art from the collection.

Requests for art must be made by Facilities Management/Corporate Services staff in client Departments, who should contact [artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie) with details of your Department, address and requirements. Including images of the room/space for which art is sought or of artworks already installed in the building can also be helpful.

Please note that there is currently a waiting list for new art loans.

Once your request is approved, the next steps are as follows:

### **1. Visit to offices**

Art Management staff will arrange a visit to the Department seeking to borrow art to identify suitable locations for artworks.

### **2. Selection of art work**

The Art Management team will advise borrowers and assist with the selection, providing information on artists and artistic media.

### **3. Installation and delivery**

Art Management staff will procure transport and installation of artworks through professional art handlers. This may take two or three weeks, depending on the availability of art transport and art installation teams.

### **4. Loan agreements**

When final location decisions have been made and artworks installed, the Art Management Office will issue a Loan Agreement to be signed by Facilities Management/Corporate Services in the borrowing Department. It is the task of the borrower to take responsibility for the artworks placed on loan, their location and their condition, in line with [Government directives](#) in relation to asset management.

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## 6. What are my responsibilities as a borrower?

Upon receiving a loan from the OPW State Art Collection, Facilities Management/Corporate Services in the client Department signs a loan agreement and takes joint responsibility for the safekeeping of the items on loan as stipulated in [Circular 19/1996](#):

Art works which form part of the collection owned and managed by the Office of Public Works will be included in the Assets Register of that Office. ***However, Departments, in whose accommodation such works are on display, are reminded that they are responsible for their safekeeping.*** [emphasis added]

Borrowers thereby become joint custodians with the OPW of the unique artworks installed for their enjoyment within their working environment. As these artworks are listed on the OPW's Asset Register as moveable heritage assets, it is vital for auditing as well as for the care and protection of the artworks that the borrowing Department follows the conditions set out in the loan agreement.

In particular, the borrower has to contact the OPW Art Management Office in advance if an artwork needs to be removed or relocated.

The borrower also has to inform us without delay of any damage to, or loss of, artworks.

Please email [artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie) or phone 01 647 6076/647 6077.

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## 7. Can I exchange loans?

If you feel it is necessary to exchange existing loans for new ones, ask Facilities Management/Corporate Services in your Department to contact [artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie) with details outlining the reasons for seeking the removal of existing art and your new requirements.

Requests for new artworks will be processed following the same principles as outlined in section 5 above for new loans and are subject to availability and a waiting period.

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## 8. What do I need to do if I want art in my office moved or removed?

Artworks from the OPW State Art Collection are moveable heritage assets and are listed on the OPW's Asset Register and also on the OPW's online Art and Heritage Collections System in accordance with current accounting regulations. The OPW Art Management Office keeps a record of the location and condition of these artworks and Art Management staff log all movement on the art asset database. Under the terms of the loan agreement with the OPW, borrowers must not move or remove artworks within building locations or to another building, as they risk damaging artworks through incorrect handling and make it impossible for the Art Management Office to keep track of the exact location of each item in the collection.

Therefore, to protect these valuable and unique cultural assets we ask you to notify the OPW Art Management Office of any intended refurbishment that requires temporary removal of artworks for their safekeeping, or if you simply wish to have an artwork (or artworks) moved elsewhere or removed entirely. All art move requests within buildings must be administered through your Facilities Management/Corporate Services as loan agreements are in place. Staff must not move artworks without contacting their Facilities Management/Corporate Services sections.

Once notified by your Department's Facilities Management/Corporate Services, our staff will procure the professional removal, storage and, if desired, reinstallation of the artworks at no cost to your Department. We can be contacted at [artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie) and we would ask to be given as much advance notice as possible to make the necessary arrangements.

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## 9. How do I return a loan?

If you wish to return an artwork on loan from the OPW State Art Collection, please advise Facilities Management/Corporate Services in your building in the first instance, as formal loan agreements are in place and they will contact the Art Management Office to arrange for the removal of the artwork. Once the artwork is returned to the OPW State Art Collection's art store, it will become available to other potential borrowers on our waiting list.

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## 10. What do I do if I notice damage to a work on loan?

Please notify us without delay of any damage. Ask Facilities Management/Corporate Services in your Department to email [artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie) or phone 01 647 6076/647 6077. We will then arrange for the removal and restoration of the artwork in question.

If damage occurs outside office hours and you cannot contact the OPW Art Management Office, please follow these simple steps to mitigate the damage:

1. Move artworks to a secure, environmentally controlled area (in other words, not to a damp cellar or a hot boiler room) to ensure the artworks do not incur any further damage.
2. If a damaged picture which is glazed has to be moved, apply sticky tape to broken glass to hold it in place but never let sticky tape touch the surface of an artwork. Ensure personal safety in handling broken glass and aim to avoid damage to the surface of the artwork. Do not use sticky tape on a picture that is not glazed.
3. Place the damaged artwork in a secure location. If there is more than one damaged picture, ensure that pictures are stored safely. Do not pile a number of pictures together – place only a maximum of two or three pictures together in a pile. The key issue is to protect the picture surface: stack pictures with front of frames facing each other or back-to-back, making sure that neither the surface of artworks nor glass is being touched. If frames are damaged, store broken pieces in a jiffy bag.
4. Damaged sculptures, ceramics or glass works should be handled with great care. Take care when handling broken fragments and place all broken pieces into a jiffy bag or box.
5. Contact the OPW Art Management Office immediately at [artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie) so we can arrange collection and conservation of the artwork.

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## 11. What do I do if I notice the loss of a loan?

Please notify your Facilities Management/Corporate Services Section immediately if you notice an artwork has been removed from its display location. Your Facilities Management/Corporate Services Section will contact the OPW (email [artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie) or phone 01 647 6076/647 6077) as a matter of urgency. Artworks are valuable assets and it is essential that any movement of an artwork is treated as seriously to minimise risk of damage or loss.

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## 12. What do I need to know about caring for a work on loan?

Here are some general recommendations for the day-to-day care of different art media for the information of borrowers and Facilities staff in client Departments.

If artworks require specialist care or repair, please notify us immediately and we will arrange this: email [artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie) or phone 01 647 6076/647 6077.

### 12.1 Paintings and graphics

- Picture lights should only be used with great care. They should be checked to ensure that they do not cause heating on the surface of the picture. They should be positioned at a correct level from the picture. If it is planned to change lighting in close proximity to a borrowed framed artwork, consult the Art Management Office prior to installation of new lighting. Do not install picture lights over a picture without prior consultation with the Art Management Office.
- The surface of an unglazed painting is extremely vulnerable and should never be touched. Ensure that unglazed picture surfaces are not dusted or wiped with a cloth. If a picture is excessively dirty, contact the Art Management Office ([artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie)) for advice on whether or not professional attention is necessary. **The client Department is responsible for informing cleaning staff that they are not to clean artworks with cleaning fluids or furniture polish as they will damage artworks.**
- Spraying glazed pictures with cleaning fluids or furniture polish should never be undertaken. Only use a dry clean feather duster to dust a picture.
- Do not place anything against a picture surface. In particular, care should be taken with flower arrangements and plants to ensure they do not rest on frames or picture surfaces. Do not place catering equipment or hot water in close proximity to artworks as heat and steam can damage artworks.
- Do not stick or pin anything to the frame of an artwork.
- Never rest furniture against pictures.

### 12.2 Marble sculpture

- Marble is composed of crystal masses and it is easily damaged. As it is also porous and very absorbent, it stains very easily and so should never be touched or handled.



- Ensure that marble sculpture is not polished, waxed or washed, as this will damage the surface. Obtain the advice of the Art Management Office on cleaning marble ([artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie)).
- Sculptures should never be vacuum cleaned.
- Ensure that nothing is placed against, or left leaning on, the sculpture. Particular care should be taken with the placement of flower arrangements and plants.

## 12.3 Bronze and copper alloy sculpture

Bronze should only be cleaned by expert conservators. For day-to-day care of bronze sculpture, please note the following:

- Never use water or solvents to clean bronze.
- The surface can be dusted lightly with a clean feather duster. This should not be done frequently – only once or twice a year.
- Polishing is to be avoided at all times.
- Bright green spots are a sign of corrosion and could indicate ‘bronze disease’ which destroys the surface area of a sculpture. If there are signs of this, contact the OPW Art Management Office immediately ([artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie)).

## 12.4 Textiles

When caring for textiles:

- Ensure that furniture is not placed directly against textiles, for example, the back of a chair resting against the surface of a tapestry.
- Wooden castor caps should be placed under the legs of heavy furniture to protect vulnerable carpets. This is particularly important if metal castors are used on the base of the furniture.
- If textile artworks require vacuuming, please contact the Art Management Office who will facilitate this with a suitable museum vacuum cleaner.
- If a textile piece is no longer in use, contact the Art Management Office ([artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie)) so the work can be relocated in another suitable place.

## 12.5 Ceramics and mosaics

‘Ceramics’ covers pottery and porcelain objects such as sculpture, vases, figurines, urns, display plates and crockery made from clay. The following recommendations also apply to mosaics.

- Ceramics and mosaics should be handled as little as possible. When doing so, ensure that you have plenty of space to pick up the object and use both hands. Check that hands are clean. In the case of delicate objects, gloves (synthetic, not fabric) should be used. Do not lift an object by its handle. Cradle it in both hands under the base. Check for hairline cracks before lifting as these may not be obvious until it is too late and breakage occurs.
- Do not place ceramics on the edge of a table or in any place where they are in danger of being knocked over.
- Ceramics or mosaics should be cleaned with a dry, clean, soft cloth. It is wiser to dust objects thoroughly on an infrequent basis rather than quickly on a regular basis. This means less handling, so less chance of breakage.
- If a ceramic piece is no longer in use, contact the Art Management Office so the work can be relocated in another suitable place ([artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie)).

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## 13. Who can I contact with additional queries?

You can email us at [artmanagement@opw.ie](mailto:artmanagement@opw.ie) with any additional questions.

You can also find a range of information and downloadable documents about the OPW State Art Collection online [here](#).