



OPW Oifig na
nOibreacha Poiblí
Office of Public Works

Factsheets

How to Care for Artworks on Loan from the OPW State Art Collection

Version 1, February 2021

OPW State Art Collection
Art Management Office
Office of Public Works
artmanagement@opw.ie

Joint Custodians

By borrowing art from the OPW State Art Collection, you have become a joint custodian of artworks that are unique and that constitute a significant public inheritance held in trust for the nation. While these works are on loan to your Department, it is your responsibility to ensure their safekeeping, so we ask you to familiarise yourself with the following care instructions and to bring them to the attention of staff – in particular, Facilities staff – in your Department.

Thank you for your co-operation!

If an artwork is damaged or broken

If artworks require specialist care or repair, please notify the OPW Art Management Office immediately and we will arrange this. Ask Facilities Management/Corporate Services in your Department to email artmanagement@opw.ie or phone 01 647 6076/647 6077.

Outside office hours, you can mitigate further damage by following these simple steps:

1. Move artworks to a secure, environmentally controlled area (in other words, not to a damp cellar or a hot boiler room) where there is no chance of their getting accidentally knocked or of being in the way of staff.
2. If a damaged picture that 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 an unglazed picture.
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 lot of pictures together – place only two/three pictures together in a pile. The key issue is to protect the picture surface, so 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, keep 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 at the earliest possible opportunity so we can arrange collection and conservation of the artwork.



Figure 1: A selection of artworks in different media from the OPW State Art Collection (clockwise from top right: Conor Fallon, *Little Hawk*; Caoimhe Kilfeather, *Crest*; Jason Ellis, *Luxembourg Rose*; Dragana Jurisic, *Dreaming of ...* (detail); Paul James Kearney, *San Diego I*; Multiple Artists (Palimpsest/ / Rianú Project), *An Arrangement of Skin*)

Day-to-day Care Instructions for Different Art Media

Paintings & 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) 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 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 damage artworks.
- Do not stick or pin anything to the frame of an artwork.
- Never rest furniture against pictures.



Tom Climent, *Encampment* (2016)

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).
- 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.



Barbara Knezevic, *To a vanishing point (an iteration)* (2014)

Bronze/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, please contact the OPW Art Management Office immediately: email artmanagement@opw.ie or phone 01 647 6076/6476077.



Conor Fallon, *Little Hawk* (2005)

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, please contact the Art Management Office so the work can be relocated in another suitable place. Email artmanagement@opw.ie or phone 01 647 6076/647 60772.



Gillian Freedman, *Juggling About* (detail) (2001)

Ceramics & 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 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 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, please contact the Art Management Office so the work can be relocated in another suitable place: email artmanagement@opw.ie or phone 01 647 6076/647 6077.



Frances Lambe, *Fire Dragon Egg*