

POLICY FOR CARE OF THE COLLECTIONS

Approved by the Board of Trustees in October 2026

Date of next review: October 2029

1. Introduction

- 1.1. This is a framework policy for Collection Care, outlining how Tate fulfils its responsibilities under the Museum and Galleries Act 1992, guided by Tate's mission statement and vision.
- 1.2. The policy outlines Tate's approach to balancing preservation and access in relation to Tate's collections of art, archive, library, and public records, in both physical and digital format. It confirms that Tate will adhere to appropriate national and international guidelines and codes of ethics whilst clarifying that all decisions will be based on assessment of risk and available resources. It emphasises consistent, high standards of professional judgement in the collective provision of a level of care appropriate to each circumstance.
- 1.3. The policy is underpinned by the nine principles for Collection Care (Appendix 1). Preventive rather than responsive care is a key tenet.

2. Strategic approach

- 2.1. Our strategy is a pragmatic, risk-based approach in which our teams evaluate all activities in the context of evidence, impact, and resource. Evidence is drawn from: staff knowledge and expertise, research and analysis, published literature context, and relevant legislation, and with reference to professional guidance, standards, and best practice in the sector.
- 2.2. This approach is applied consistently to achieve care appropriate to each object in Tate's collections. In determining what action to take in a specific case, we consider the following factors:
 - maintaining the integrity of the object
 - risk to the object i.e., potential for change, damage, deterioration, or theft
 - ethical guidelines
 - contractual or legislative terms and conditions
 - resource
 - environmental sustainability
 - external relationships
 - public benefit
- 2.3. Collection Care implements this strategic approach, working with stakeholders across Tate in the following ways:
 - preservation
 - environment and sustainability
 - access
 - accountability, governance, and standards
 - people and partnerships
- 2.4. Adopting this pragmatic and sustainable approach has enhanced the international reputation of Tate's Collection Care division.

3. Preservation

Tate will:

- 3.1. preserve Tate's collections through appropriate physical and digital storage, handling, collection management, preventive conservation, research, analysis, and conservation treatments.
- 3.2. identify, monitor, and mitigate the risks of deterioration and obsolescence for the collections.
- 3.3. implement a preventive conservation approach, including measures to reduce damage or deterioration associated with known risks to the collections.
- 3.4. give precedence for treatment to objects which require stabilisation or are requested through Tate's programmes (acquisition, display, exhibition, loans out and touring).
- 3.5. undertake research and scientific analysis to increase understanding of Tate's collections, support safer treatments, and inform Tate's approach to care and management.
- 3.6. undertake appropriate care of all objects temporarily within Tate's care.
- 3.7. embed emergency and salvage planning for the collections as part of Tate's overall Business Continuity Plan.

4. Environment and sustainability

Tate will:

- 4.1. embed sustainability across collection care practices in accordance with Tate's policy.
- 4.2. monitor and analyse the environmental conditions in all areas used for the collections.
- 4.3. contribute to a safe, stable, and sustainable environment for the collections.
- 4.4. actively challenge, assess, and research our methods and working practices to reduce environmental impact in the context of caring for our collections.
- 4.5. seek to influence the sector in line with Tate's policy and practice on sustainability.

5. Access

Tate will:

- 5.1. apply its policies and procedures to support both physical and digital access to Tate's collections and associated documentation for the benefit of all audiences.
- 5.2. facilitate access to its collections through Tate's national and international programmes of display, exhibition, loan, and tours.
- 5.3. provide public access through the Library and Archive Reading Rooms and Prints and Drawings Rooms to its library and archive collections and its works on paper collections whilst not on display.
- 5.4. provide public access wherever possible to stored collections.
- 5.5. make catalogue information on all its accessioned collection items publicly available on Tate's website.

6. Accountability, Governance and Standards

Tate will:

- 6.1. maintain good governance and due diligence in the care, management, and documentation of Tate's collections.
- 6.2. meet all national and international statutory and legislative requirements governing the care of its collections.
- 6.3. refer to and consider all ethical guidelines, standards and practices relating to the care of its collections.
- 6.4. manage and mitigate risk to its collections, balancing our responsibilities of care and access.
- 6.5. document its activities and findings in the field of collection care and provide access to this information.
- 6.6. create and store information about Tate's collections in a consistent way, and adhere to relevant national and international standards.

7. People and Partnerships

Tate will:

- 7.1. continue to develop the talent, skills and expertise of its staff to improve standards, efficiency, and effectiveness in the care of Tate's collections.
- 7.2. undertake, disseminate, and apply collaborative research and innovation to the care of its collections, seeking to minimise risk to the works in its care.
- 7.3. actively seek and share expertise and knowledge in collection care with colleagues in the wider museum and gallery sector, nationally and internationally.
- 7.4. respond to public enquiries in the field of collection care.
- 7.5. seek to influence the sector in line with Tate's policy and practice as appropriate.

8. Communication, Monitoring and Review

- 8.1. This policy is available to all via Tate's website.
- 8.2. The Director of Collection Care is responsible for the implementation, updating and review of this policy. A review will be carried out every three years by the Collection Care leadership team in consultation with stakeholders. The Director of Collection Care, as strategic risk owner, will provide assurance to the Board of Trustees on the effectiveness of controls to mitigate the risk of change, deterioration or damage to items in Tate's collections.

APPENDIX 1: Principles for Care of the Collection

Statutory responsibilities

Collection Care supports Tate's overall function, as set out in the Museums and Galleries Act 1992:

- to care for and preserve the works of art and documents in Tate's collections;
- to ensure that the works of art are exhibited to the public;
- to ensure that the works of art and the documents are available to persons seeking to inspect them in connection with study or research.

Our mission is "to manage, preserve and enable access to Tate's collections in physical and digital format, now and for the future"

The Principles

The nine principles of Collection Care underpin our policy and practice in caring for Tate's collections:

1. Preservation

We will preserve Tate's collections through appropriate physical and digital storage, handling, collection management practices, preventive conservation, research and analysis, and conservation treatment. We will contribute to the provision of a safe, stable, and sustainable environment for the care of Tate's collections.

2. Access

We will provide support for Tate's programme of activity, enabling both physical and digital access and engagement for the benefit of all audiences. We will facilitate public access to our stored collections.

3. People

We will develop the talent, skills and expertise of our staff and maintain consistency in the care of Tate's collections.

4. Standards

We will improve procedures and practices for the care of Tate's collections. We will adhere to the appropriate international guidelines and codes of ethics and act as advocates for such international agreements in all areas of collection care and management.

5. Accountability

We will document our activities and findings to provide a transparent record of our decision-making.

6. Governance

We will maintain good governance and due diligence in care, management, and documentation of Tate's collections. We will meet all national and international statutory and legislative requirements, ensuring compliance throughout Tate.

7. Sustainability

We will actively challenge, assess, and embed our methods and working practices to reduce the environmental impact of caring for Tate's collections.

8. Partnerships

We will collaborate, build trust, and develop partnerships to promote, improve, and share knowledge and practice in caring for Tate's collections.

9. Future

We will anticipate and respond to change: conducting research, developing expertise, and adapting our approach where appropriate to meet the challenges of our evolving collections.