RIT Archive Collections
University Art Collection
Collection Development Policy

Description of the Existing Collection

The current collection dates to the 19th century and contains works in a variety of media, including drawings, photography, paintings, sculpture, prints, ceramics, fiber, glass, metals, jewelry, decorative arts and other types of valuable artifacts. The bulk of the collection dates from 1910 to 1980. The current collection numbers over 7,000 individual pieces by 1,400 different makers.

The collection of faculty works, many of them by RIT’s best-known and most successful faculty members, also date to this earlier period but taper off in the 1960s. These works demonstrate the skill and aesthetic achievement of the individual, but importantly point to the focus of academic programs and curriculum.

A portion of the art collection is made up of works by former students. A few works date back to 1880s, when the first visual arts classes were held at the Mechanics Institute (the name of the University prior to 1944). Most of these student pieces came out of classroom exercises or projects and reflect the changing focus of the art programs and their curriculum. The artist’s name is known for the majority of works, and some went on to achieve some recognition in their career.

The Wallace Library Purchase Prize project, founded in 1972, continues to augment the collection with yearly acquisitions of works by undergraduate and graduate students in the College of Imaging Arts and Sciences.

Following is a breakdown of the University Art Collection:

**RIT Archives** - Portraits of administrators, trustees, and faculty, and works by faculty and non-affiliated artists acquired by donation. Includes works by Eugene Colby, first teacher at the Mechanics Institute, and faculty members John Wenrich, Hans Christiansen, Lulu Scott Backus, Stanley Gordon, and Clifford Ulp. Approximately 125 works.

**RIT Archive Collections Photography Collection** - Includes a number of modest collections of 10 – 40 works by former faculty and alumni, dating to the earliest years of the photography programs at RIT, including Frederick Brehm, Robert Bagby, Charles Arnold, Les Kirms, and Mike Geissinger. A number of portfolios, including a series of portfolios of student work from the 1970s and faculty and staff photographs created in the 1980s document those two decades. There is also a large collection of student photographs from classroom exercises made during the 1940s and 1950s. This collection numbers over 1,000 photographs, all acquired by donation.
Individual Photographer Archives – Ralph Hattersley’s substantial archive of contact sheets and negatives document this RIT faculty member’s career. Also included is RIT alumnus Bernie Boston’s archive of approximately 300 prints, 1,000 wire photos and thousands of negatives from his long and distinguished career as a photojournalist and White House Press photographer. The newest acquisition is the archive of pioneering color photographer Jeannette Klute, who studied photography at RIT in the 1940s. She mastered the difficult dye-transfer process to make elegant portraits of flowers and plants in their natural surroundings. The collection includes 123 prints, as well as matrices for the dye transfer process.

150th Anniversary Collection – 300 works assembled for a special exhibit curated by former faculty member Stanley Wittmeyer and Dean Harold Brennan on the occasion of the University’s 150th anniversary in 1979. Includes works by students and faculty dating back to 1886, such as Milton Bond, Bob Conge, cartoonist Clayton Knight, Ralph Avery, Theodore Hanford Pond and Charles Horn.

SPAS 100th Anniversary Collection - Works by School of Photographic Arts and Sciences alumni (graduated 1942-2000) and current and retired faculty assembled for an exhibit during the 2003 anniversary celebration. Collection numbers 275 photographs.

Bevier Collection – Works acquired by donation and purchase by faculty and administration of the visual arts programs since the early 20th century. The collection includes faculty and student works as well as pieces by artists not affiliated with RIT, including over 100 fine art prints dating from the 1930s through the 1960s purchased for office furnishings and to use as classroom teaching aids. Artists represented in the print collection include Thomas Hart Benton and Rockwell Kent. Among the many faculty represented are Fritz VanderLanken, Tom Kekic, Fred Meyer, and David Dickinson. Significant works by outside artists include a portrait by well-known Rochester artist Kathleen McEnery. The collection numbers over 400 works.

Editorial Cartoons – Includes 1,500 original drawings for political cartoons published in Rochester newspapers by RIT graduate and former faculty member Elmer Messner and 3,000 original political cartoons published in Rochester newspapers by John Scott Clubb. The Messner collection also includes original cartoons by over fifty different national and local artists, including a number of Pulitzer Prize winners.

Photography Purchase Prize collection – Works chosen from the SPAS annual honors show by a committee consisting of the Art and Photography Librarian, the RIT Archivist and a SPAS faculty member. Begun in 1981, this collection currently numbers over 275 works.

Fine Arts Purchase Prize collection – Works by graduate students from the School of Art and Design and School for American Crafts. Chosen by a committee consisting of the Art and Photography Librarian, the RIT Archivist and a two faculty members. Begun in 1972, this collection currently numbers over 197 works.
Liberty Hill Collection – This collection includes art works as well as valuable household wares, decorative pieces and furniture used by the RIT president and his or her family.

Collection Development Policy

RIT continues to develop, enhance, and augment the University Art Collection, using the existing collections as a guide. Works can be in any media taught at RIT. The RIT Archivist will direct the collecting program with the following goals:

1. Assemble a collection that documents the nature and content of the visual art and imaging science programs at RIT through acquisition of a modest number (up to 5) of works from current and past faculty and alumni. This goal will also be accomplished by continuing to build a collection of student works through the Wallace Library Purchase Prize projects;

2. Assemble a collection of works by current and former visual art and imaging science faculty, who have received recognition for individual achievement in their field;

4. Acquire major collections or archives of works by RIT faculty and alumni who have achieved significant career recognition in their chosen visual art form;

5. The University Art Collection may accept works by a non-affiliated artist or other types of collections and objects if the works would enhance student education, relate in a substantial way to existing RIT educational programs, or relate to a work or works in existing collections;

6. The University Art Collection may accept works by a non-affiliated artist if the work is deemed suitable for public display based on aesthetic quality, potential to enhance RIT’s visual environment and visual integration with the design of campus.

7. Consideration of suitability for exhibition; fragility of materials; conservation issues; the impact on collections’ storage space; and the financial impact of housing and managing the potential acquisition.

Acquisitions procedures

Any RIT staff member identifying a potential acquisition, whether an individual work or collection of art or artifacts, will contact the RIT Archivist with a detailed description of the items. The RIT Archivist will then contact the University Art Advisory Committee, which will review the potential acquisition and for major acquisitions, will make recommendations to the University Art Leadership Team. Acquisitions with a value greater than $1500 require the approval of the University Art Leadership Team. Due consideration will be given to the
financial and staffing commitment made for the preservation, exhibition, storage, and protection, including insurance, of the items under consideration for acquisition.

Approved donations to RIT Archive Collections are permanent gifts of collection objects. In the case of a gift or bequest, RIT Archive Collections will provide the donor(s) a deed of gift outlining the terms of acceptance and the date of receipt. The donor’s signature on the deed of gift will transfer title to RIT. The Library Director will also sign the deed of gift and return a copy to the donor. For large collections and archives, RIT reserves the right to dispose of or return any unwanted items to the donor as agreed upon during the transfer process.

RIT Archive Collections does not provide, either verbally or in writing, appraisals of donated materials. Appraisals for the donor's income tax purposes must be obtained by the donor from other sources.

It is the responsibility of the RIT Archivist to communicate and work with RIT’s development office to insure that all gifts are handled according to university policy and procedure, regardless of monetary value.

1. **Acquisition of a small number of works by gift, bequest or purchase with a value less than $1,500 is considered in the realm of a minor acquisition:**

Minor acquisitions (objects or collections) will be managed by RIT Archive Collections with quarterly reports made to the University Art Advisory Committee and the University Art Leadership Team. A complete detailed description of the object or objects and a photograph is necessary for consideration.

2. **Acquisition of significant individual works or collection/archives**

The University Art Advisory Committee will review all major donations or purchases of individual works and collections and make recommendations to the University Art Leadership Team. All major donations or purchases require the approval of the University Art Leadership Team. Outside experts may be brought in to advise on the value or condition of any collection prior to acceptance. A detailed description of the collection or archive is required to make an assessment and potential acquisitions must be physically seen and evaluated by the RIT Archivist in consultation with the committee. Large acquisitions require careful consideration due to space and staffing issues. The financial impact of any proposed donation will be assessed to determine whether the acquisition would incur significant additional expenses related to the organization, care, and housing of the collection or archive. Potential donors will be encouraged to consider funding the initial organization and physical processing of the collections as well as providing financial support for future care of the collection. Any object under consideration must be exhibitable or able to be made so by a reasonable conservation plan.
3. Bequests/gifts

Bequests will receive the same consideration as any other potential acquisition. Upon notification that RIT is a beneficiary under a will, the appropriate personnel will obtain a copy of the will or a copy of the section that outlines the bequest. A photograph and detailed description will be delivered to the University Art Advisory Committee. The Advisory Committee will review the bequests and make a recommendation to the University Art Leadership Team. Acceptance of bequests requires the approval of the University Art Leadership Team. The University Art Advisory Committee may recommend that the collection or object(s) be sold. Upon approval from the University Art Leadership Team, proceeds from the sale can be used to purchase works or put towards continuing care and maintenance of the RIT Art Collection.

Deaccession of collection objects

Periodically, the University Art Collection will be reviewed by the RIT Archivist to determine if collection object(s) are relevant to the mission of RIT Archive Collections and fit with the Collection Development Policy and to assess the benefit to the university from their continued management and care. De-accessioning is part of the continuing formation and care of the collections and is intended to refine and improve quality and appropriateness of the collections.

Works of art and artifacts in the University Art Collection are de-accessioned only after rigorous scrutiny and as a result of a deliberate decision to refine the holdings. All de-accessions must be reviewed by the University Art Advisory Committee and approved by the University Art Leadership Team.

Objects considered for de-accession may include the following:

1. Objects not consistent with the collecting areas outlined in the Collection Development Policy;
2. The quality of the collection will be strengthened by the de-accession of the objects;
3. Objects determined to be below a level of quality sufficient to serve the educational function of the University Art Collection;
4. Duplicate and redundant objects;
5. Objects damaged or deteriorated beyond reasonable repair;
6. Objects for which the RIT Archive Collections is not able to provide proper storage and care;
7. The object is not authentic.