BEHIND THE SCENES

1. OPERATION OF A PUBLIC GALLERY

Public Galleries are generally funded out of taxes and run for the good of the community. They exhibit works, collect works for their permanent collections and preserve their collections. Smaller public galleries occasionally sell art works but this is not their prime function.

Commercial Galleries are set up to sell works of art and are run on the proceeds of these sales.

Other Arts Spaces are usually oriented to the display of work which may or may not have a commercial orientation. They usually do not collect works either.

Hamilton Art Gallery is a public gallery owned, managed and funded by the Southern Grampians Shire Council with funding assistance from the State Government through Arts Victoria.

Mission Statement

A public funded permanent institution, to serve the people of the Southern Grampians Shire and the greater population, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits, for the purpose of study, education, enjoyment and the creation of a public community spirit, material evidence of man’s aesthetic achievements.
Aims

To stimulate awareness, understanding and enjoyment of the visual arts and to care for, develop and promote the collections of works of art for the Shire and the wider community.

♦ To acquire art of the highest aesthetic quality and exhibit works in their context.
♦ To make the collection and associated programs accessible and relevant to the community.
♦ To take a long term approach to planning for the collection to ensure its adequate funding, correct management, conservation and security for future generations.
♦ To provide exhibitions, programs, publications and educational services that stimulate curiosity, awaken observation, encourage inquiry, inform and entertain.
♦ To see that the Gallery is utilised as the prime tourist resource within the Southern Grampians Shire
♦ To promote the Gallery as a component of the cultural heritage of Australia

Refer to www.hamiltongallery.org for details of the Gallery’s History & Collection
2. DISPLAY OF ART

Exhibitions are either generated in-house or come from another gallery as a travelling exhibition. When they are generated in-house they need a curator to provide the intellectual concept of the exhibition and to select the works to be included; an Exhibition Designer to work out how the works are to be displayed and Installation Staff to actually put the works in place. Travelling exhibitions are often accompanied by their own curator or exhibition officer who assists with the setting up of the Exhibition in order to maintain artist’s intent and integrity.

Hamilton Art Gallery presents exhibitions from its vast permanent collection ranging from historical to contemporary, local, Australian and international, in a wide range of media including decorative arts (silver, porcelain, glass, oriental ceramics, objects d’art, Asian artefacts), paintings, watercolours, prints, photographs and tapestries. Hamilton also hosts high quality travelling exhibitions.

This Exhibition titled Past Vs Present - Chinese Photographs is a combination of works from our own collection (gifted to the gallery) and works borrowed from the NGV.

3. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Legal Rights - Legal issues are basically around copyright. The Australian Copyright law of 1968 protects artists from having their work exploited, plagiarised or used without their permission. Copyright gives legal ownership of the image (or text in the case of a book) to the artist until 70 years after their death. Infringement of copyright has severe penalties but an image (or text) can be used if a royalty fee is paid and the owner of the copyright agrees to the use of the image. There are limitations on how, and where, the image may be reproduced and this ties in with moral rights. Reproduction of artworks includes their use on internet sites, photocopying.

A common issue that is encountered in post-modern art is ‘quotation’ or ‘appropriation’ of another artist’s image or part-image to create a new work. This can infringe copyright. The intention behind the use becomes significant in these circumstances, as does the amount of the image reproduced, and the context in which it is reproduced.

Moral Rights - are harder to define but it essentially amounts to having sensitivity to the artist’s intention behind the use of their work. Legislation was passed in December 2000 awarding artists moral rights, effective immediately upon the creation of a new work. They want their work clearly displayed, and if reproduced it should be done without impacting on the image i.e. no distortions, colour changes, ridiculous size reductions or magnifications etc. We also respect the artist’s choice of frame and mount (or lack thereof when the artist does not want their work framed) or other particular conditions on the presentation and display of the work. The integrity of the artist and work must be maintained.

Note: A comprehensive and easy to read overview of this topic can be viewed at; www.copyright.org.au
4. ROLE AND WORK OF CURATORS

Exhibition development involves undertaking research, sourcing exhibits and developing the substance and content of the exhibition. It also involves assessing the suitability of objects for display and considering any conservation or framing that may be necessary in order to include works in an exhibition. Objects to be displayed should be inspected and their condition recorded on a condition report.

Directors are to oversee the management of the Gallery and to develop policies and practices that give the Gallery its overall direction. This frequently involves the selection of travelling exhibitions from other Galleries.

Curators are responsible for generating exhibitions and for looking after, and developing the permanent collection. In smaller Galleries the Director is frequently the curator as well!

5. ACQUISITION POLICIES

Acquisition policies are documents that specify the direction in which the permanent collection will be developed. They are determined so that the Curator has a guide when developing the collection. These policies usually specify what is to be collected – they may define the medium, specific artists or categories of artist and usually they reflect the composition of the pre-existing collection.

6. SPONSORSHIP

Sponsorship involves seeking support from outside individuals, agencies or corporations in the form of money or in-kind support e.g. free media coverage. Sponsorship also comes in the form of donations and bequests to the collection. Any source of external support to the development of the collection, exhibitions or public.

7. SELECTION OF EXHIBITIONS

Exhibition selection. Most exhibitions have a theme. In selecting a theme for an exhibition the gallery or the curator considers the following:

- Intended audience
- Objects in the gallery’s permanent collection that can be included
- Possibility of loaning relevant artworks from other art institutions
- Interest within the broader community for such an exhibition
- Exhibition’s ability to develop and communicate new ideas, interpretations or information
- Availability of guest consultants, curators and writers who are specialists in the area to assist with various components of the exhibition
- Ability of the venue to present the exhibition i.e. staff, facilities, equipment and space (both for storage and display) are adequate.
8. INSTALLATION AND PRESENTATION OF EXHIBITIONS

Exhibition layout. Factors that contribute to the way an exhibition is laid out include:

- the amount of wall/display case space available
- the size of the artworks to be displayed – small or fragile objects are exhibited in display cases
- the narrative or story line of the exhibition
- the ideas/concepts you wish to communicate
- the artworks you select as focal points
- the context you wish to give art works
- the medium being exhibited

The gallery generates identifying labels for works in-house to a set format. The amount of information on labels varies according to the exhibition. If a catalogue is not available for an exhibition, then extended labels and wall texts may be used.

9. CONSERVATION

To ensure the correct care of art objects during storage, exhibition and transit the environmental conditions need to be considered. The environmental enemies in an art gallery include light, damp and extreme temperature. All of these factors damage art works. For this reason the gallery has specially designed atmospheric and lighting control systems.

Lighting:

Light affects most materials and is especially detrimental to paper (including photographs), textiles and dyes. Least affected are ceramics and metals. It causes objects to fade or slowly decompose. Light-related damage can be caused by the intensity and the length of exposure. If exposure levels are high the items needs to be stored in darkness for longer periods between exhibitions i.e. it is the total annual exposure that is significant. The Ultra Violet (invisible) end of the spectrum causes the major damage hence it is measured as well as the total light level.

The recommended lighting levels for exhibitions adhered to in Australian public galleries is:

- up to 100 lux for textiles, original photographs, printed paper, watercolours and paintings on bark; with UV levels of up to 30 microwatts per lumen
- up to 200 lux for oil and acrylic paintings; with UV levels of up to 75 watts per lumen
- up to 300 lux for objects made of ceramic, glass and stone

The light and UV radiation levels in an exhibition space are checked with a Lux meter.

Temperature & Humidity:

High temperatures and variations in humidity are detrimental to art works because they speed up the ageing process and can be detrimental to the condition of the object –i.e. can cause warping, cracking, swelling, corrosion and the spread of mould. Consistency in temperature and humidity is
crucial during an exhibition and the storing of artworks. The same temperature must be maintained 24 hours a day, 7 days a week in the exhibition and storage areas. Consequently the gallery’s air conditioning runs day and night – not just during visiting hours.

- The recommended temperature level for galleries is 20º C (+/- 2º)
- The recommended relative humidity level for galleries is 55% (+/- 5%)

A thermo-hydrograph is used to measure the relative humidity and temperature in the Gallery and storage.

10. STORAGE AND TRANSITS

Storage:

The design and composition of storage units is important in protecting art objects.

Unframed works of art on paper should be completely sealed against dust and insects and are best stored in Solander boxes. Only acid-free paper or board should be used in direct contact with works on paper. Acid causes paper to yellow and become brittle. Similarly framed photographs are surrounded with acid-free mount board.

Frames both protect a work and focus the viewer’s attention on the work. Framed works of art are stored on screens.

Cotton gloves are worn when handling artworks.

Transit:

Art works are wrapped in bubble wrap or transported in custom made crates in order to minimise the risk of damage. These crates are usually lined with foam which protects as well as insulates the artworks. Professional carriers who specialise in handling fragile museum objects are used. When taking delivery of artworks on loan from another institution the condition of the artwork is checked upon arrival and compared against the loaning institution’s original condition report. Similarly works are checked (condition reported) at the end of an exhibition.

11. PUBLICATIONS

Publications are frequently generated in conjunction with exhibitions and sometimes to simply document the collection. These usually involve a Curator to write the text, a photographer to photograph the works, a graphic designer to work out how the publication should look and a printer to actually print the publication.

12. PUBLICITY

Publicity for exhibitions is generated in the form of Press releases, information and photographs for exhibitions are distributed to the media (print, radio, TV).

Public Programs: eg Exhibition Openings, Artists Talks, Community Group Visits, Education Programs all help attract an audience to visit an exhibition.
Free editorial and listings, local radio coverage (3HA, ABC), newsletters (Gallery, Schools, Community), brochures, direct mail out, email, posters, flyers, Visitor Information Centres and Gallery website are useful in conveying information about current and upcoming exhibitions.

Paid advertising also helps attract an audience for exhibitions being presented.