

* Museum Archivist The Museum of Modern Art

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I would like to propose a brief lecture to address the role of the use of "private archives" in order to foster the dialogue and comprehension of art displayed in the public realm. At The Museum of Modern Art Archives, there are a multitude of collections which address the origins, evolution and interpretation of modern and contemporary art. As head of the Museum Archives, I will discuss the extent to which these materials are utilized to promote the discourse of modern art history. Furthermore, I will address the notion of the private archive, in that the institutional archives at MoMA are essentially private archives, as MoMA is a private institution which receives no operating funding from any local, state or federal agency. In this way it differs from many other of the great museums in the world. I will elaborate on how this is reflected in the access policies to certain institutional documentation, which is in some cases more stringent than those of our governmentally funded colleagues (classified documents not withstanding). Finally, the MoMA Archives very importantly expands its resource base by collecting outside private archives which closely and carefully complement the institution's holdings. Dozens of such private archives are represented in the collections and they comprise the papers of artists, dealers, editors, art historians, writers and the records of art galleries. I will also discuss the collection development policy that I authored to guide such acquisitions and I will elucidate it with important examples.

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Vorrei proporre un breve intervento per affrontare il tema dell'uso di "archivi privati" al fine di favorire il dialogo e la comprensione dell'arte esposta al pubblico. Nell'Archivio del Museo di Arte Moderna vi sono una moltitudine di collezioni che testimoniano le origini, l'evoluzione e l'interpretazione

Considered one of the best museums of modern and contemporary art in the world, The Museum of Modern Art attracts a broad public and indeed is visited by some 2.15 million people annually. Through the leadership of its trustees and staff, The Museum of Modern Art manifests its commitment to this art by establishing, preserving, and documenting a permanent collection of the highest order that reflects the vitality, complexity, and unfolding patterns of modern and contemporary art; by presenting exhibitions and educational programs of unparalleled significance; by sustaining a library, archives, and conservation laboratory that are recognized as international centers of research; and by supporting scholarship and publications of preeminent intellectual merit. Central to The Museum of Modern Art's mission is the encouragement of an ever deeper understanding and enjoyment of modern and contemporary art by the diverse local, national, and international audiences that it serves.

In sum, The Museum of Modern Art seeks to create a dialogue between the established and the experimental, the past and the present, in an environment that is responsive to the issues of modern and contemporary art, while being accessible to a public that ranges from scholars to young children. The ultimate purpose of the Museum declared at its founding was to acquire the best modern works of art. While quality remains the primary criterion, the Museum acknowledges and pursues a broader educational purpose: to build a collection which is more than an assemblage of masterworks, which provides a uniquely comprehensive survey of the unfolding modern movement in all visual media.

For the past 75 years, The Museum of Modern Art has been at the forefront of recognizing and defining modern art, modernism and the modern museum. The Museum was founded in 1929 to focus on contemporary art and its direct antecedents, an outlook not shared by any other museum in the United States at that time.

While we serve the public, the Museum is not a "public" institution in the traditional sense of the term. MoMA is a private institution, with less than 1% of its budget funded by city, state or federal government. So essentially, the records of The Museum of Modern Art, one could argue, are "private archives."

Critical to an understanding of this institution's unique role in the evolution and codification of modern art, and its dissemination

to the public, is the archival record. For it is only the actual documents themselves, the items that record what happened, by whom, when, how, and why, that is - the evidence of activity - that allow scholars of today to study and understand what has come before them and to build upon it to create new forms of scholarship, installation display, and even art-making practices.

Though MoMA has already had a long life, the Museum Archives was only established as recently as 1989, sixty years after the Museum's founding. Thus, the Archives program had to do a lot of back tracking. Some of the institution's historical materials were retained haphazardly around the Museum. In recent years, we have systematically collected and consolidated the archival documentation.

The collections of the Museum Archives reveal the origins and evolution of modern and contemporary art. Chronicling the history of painting, sculpture, drawings, prints, illustrated books, photographs, architecture, design, film, and media works from 1880 to the present, archival holdings constitute an essential resource for art, social, and cultural historians of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Beginning as an institutional archive, our mandate was rather clear and focused - to document the activities of the institution. So over time, the Museum Archives began to accumulate department and programmatic records, such as early administrative files; exhibition files representing the curatorial, registrarial and traveling aspects of the exhibitions; graphics material and ephemera; press clippings about every exhibition and major event since 1929; and sound recordings of lectures and other educational programs. The other main type of material we acquired were the personal and professional papers of former Museum directors, curators, and high level administrators. All the aforementioned materials are accessioned via internal transfer, either directly to the Museum Archives, or to the Records Management program which we run. Records Management serves as a holding place for documents with future historical significance, as well as provides custody for permanent, non-archival material (e.g., legal or financial) and for records which can be discarded after a certain period of time.

The Museum Archives at MoMA are open to the public. Any individual with a serious research query may make an appointment and consult our holdings. Usage of the collections continues to steadily increase, and we now receive over 3,500 research requests annually. Our researchers typically consist of curators, professors, educators, art critics, authors and graduate students. Topics of their research can range from studying particular Museum exhibitions and programs, individual artists, provenance of works of art, trends in collecting and display, or unpublished manuscripts. This research is undertaken for a myriad of purposes, including for exhibitions, books, lectures, dissertations, articles, interviews, legal claims, or visual production.

Because the institutional archives at MoMA are essentially private archives, as MoMA is a private institution which receives the vast majority of its support from private sources and is governed by

ne dell'arte moderna e contemporanea. Nella mia qualità di direttore dell'Archivio del Museo, parlerò di quanto tali materiali vengano utilizzati per promuovere il discorso sulla storia dell'arte moderna. Inoltre parlerò della nozione di archivio privato, nel senso che l'archivio istituzionale del MoMA è essenzialmente un archivio privato, così come il MoMA è un'istituzione privata che non riceve fondi di esercizio da alcuna agenzia locale, statale o federale. In tal senso, esso differisce da molti dei maggiori musei nel mondo. Dettaglierò di come ciò vada a riflettersi sulle politiche di accesso a certa documentazione istituzionale, in molti casi molto più restrittiva di quella di pari istituzioni finanziate a livello governativo. Infine, l'Archivio del MoMA aumenta in maniera molto importante le proprie risorse di base con l'acquisizione di archivi privati che ne completano al meglio il posseduto. Dozzine di simili archivi privati sono rappresentati nelle collezioni e comprendono carte di artisti, commercianti, curatori, storici dell'arte, scrittori e documenti provenienti da gallerie d'arte. Parlerò inoltre della politica di acquisizione, della quale sono autrice, per guidare tali acquisizioni spiegandola con svariati esempi.

a board of trustees, our situation differs somewhat from many other of the great museums in the world (e.g. Tate, Louvre, Uffizi, Hermitage). This difference is reflected in the access policies to certain institutional documentation, which is in some cases more stringent than those of our governmentally funded colleagues (classified documents notwithstanding). In the United States, at publicly funded museums, such as the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC or the Brooklyn Museum in New York City, there are requirements which dictate that all records be open to researchers who request them.

The MoMA Archives seeks to make records available for research use to the fullest extent. However, we recognize that some records must be restricted to protect the legitimate interests of the Museum and the privacy of individuals. Certain information, such as condition, prices, and current insurance values of works of art are not available to outside users. Records pertaining to anonymous donors, fundraising, personnel, and Board of Trustee and Committee meetings are restricted. Those materials that must be closed temporarily in accordance with Museum policy or donor restrictions will be reviewed from time to time and opened as soon as the need for restriction has passed.

Unprocessed materials are not available to outside researchers, but may be consulted by staff members in the course of their research for the Museum. All processed records may be used by outside researchers. (Selected records, less than ten years old, may require the consent of the department head and/or Museum Archivist.)

In order to ensure that Museum records are being made available in a consistent and fair manner, we developed an access or confidentiality policy for the institution, in consultation with legal and curatorial staff. The policy identifies certain types of records or information that are confidential, another category of materials that are restricted from public consultation for 25 years after their creation, and finally outlines how to treat “delicate” or “sensitive” materials (from a legal or public relations perspective).

We consider the following confidential:

- Board of Trustees Meetings Minutes; Trustee Committee Meetings Minutes; Acquisitions Committees and Operating Committees
- Museum Collection Records: Source, Funding for acquisition except as noted in official Museum publications, Condition, Corporate ownership, For sale / exchange - records concerning reason for deaccessioning, amount sold for, and identity of buyer
- Exhibition Files: Insurance claims (works lost or damaged), Condition of works / damages, Shipping information, Security issues; guard placement, Exhibition costs / funding - the negotiations and supporting documentation concerning exhibition costs and funding, Anonymous lenders
- General Records: Personnel files, Letters of recommendation, Minutes of non-MoMA meetings

The types of materials we consider restricted for 25 years, but open thereafter include:

- Museum Collection Records: Price when acquired, Insurance value
- Exhibition Files: Insurance / value information for both MoMA collection and non-MoMA items, Exhibition budget, Exhibition contracts

Finally, there is the category of “sensitive” issues:

In attempting to be as open and transparent as possible, we allow unfettered access to material which may put MoMA in a poor light. In addition, material defaming individuals are to remain confidential for the duration of the individual’s life, but may be made available after he or she is deceased.

Due to the success of the institutional records program, in 1998 the Museum Archives was designated as being the repository for all archival or primary source collections, including all “private archives” or manuscript collections from outside, non-MoMA sources. Thus, several collections previously under the custody of the Library were transferred to us, and the mission of the Archives was greatly expanded. The placement of the manuscript collections under the auspices of the Museum Archives was part of the Museum’s effort to consolidate and better preserve primary source research materials. In addition to this initial transfer of materials in 1998, the MoMA Archives now very importantly expands its resource base by collecting outside private archives which closely and carefully complement the institution’s holdings. Dozens of such private archives are represented in the collections and they comprise the papers of artists, dealers, editors, art historians, writers and the records of art galleries.

With this new mandate, it was clear that a collection development policy was required to guide future acquisitions, and we created such a document to address this need. As with all such policies, it needed to be broad enough to embrace various, and sometimes wide-ranging, interests, yet specific. As is so often the case, policies such as this are created not necessarily to identify exactly what to collect, but more importantly to establish a framework within which one can reject collections.

To begin with, it was necessary to define the type of material and collections we seek. The non-MoMA, manuscript collections of the Museum Archives fall into four categories:

- Personal papers and records of individuals;
- Records of organizations, businesses, movements, and voluntary associations;
- Accumulations of manuscript material pertaining to a single theme, person, event, or type of record;

- Individual manuscripts (such materials are sought by the Museum Archives when they build on existing strengths and add to documentation for which the Museum Archives already has comprehensive holdings).

The Museum Archives Manuscript Collections (non-MoMA “private archives”) consist of materials generated by organizations or individuals important to the history of art from the late nineteenth-century to the present that reflect the Museum's collections and programming. These records consist of primary source material, including correspondence, typescripts, reports, research materials, photographs, financial documents, scrapbooks, diaries, annotated books, audio-visual recordings, press clippings and printed ephemera. Currently, the majority of manuscript collections in the Museum Archives are in English, with a few in German, French and Russian. In addition, the majority of the material is from North America and Europe, with a small amount from Latin America. The manuscript collections exist to support, supplement, and complement programs of research, education, and scholarship at the Museum.

After defining our scope of collecting, it was possible to identify the criteria for new acquisitions. Every potential acquisition of manuscript material undergoes rigorous scrutiny, with close consideration given to the following guidelines:

- The material must directly address the history of modern and contemporary art as it relates to the work and the broadly defined mission of the Museum.
- The manuscripts should reflect and complement the Museum's mission of establishing, preserving, and documenting a permanent collection of the highest order and of education about the vitality, complexity, and unfolding patterns of modern and contemporary art and culture. Specifically, the papers of prominent artists, architects, designers, dealers, critics, scholars, art historians, arts organizations, or galleries that document the development of modern art as defined by this Museum, would be relevant.
- The collection will serve the Museum Archives' primary audience of Museum curators and staff. In addition, it will generate broadly based research interest among those studying the visual arts from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth century.
- The chronological boundaries of the materials coincide with the period covered by the Museum's art collections, that is roughly 1840 to the present.
- As the Museum's Film Study Center is currently responsible for film material, documents related to cinema, video, and related film media will not be collected. This policy may be revised in the future.
- The items have a global art-historical importance. The Museum Archives is not the appropriate repository for items of strictly regional or U. S. interest.
- The collections are of a stable media (i.e., the Museum Archives does not accession electronic records at this time).

- The Museum Archives will have sole ownership over the materials, even if the copyright resides elsewhere. The Museum Archives, however, consistently requests that the donor of a collection of papers transfer the copyright interests in the collection to the Museum. This is specified in the Deed of Gift. In addition, the Museum Archives will only accept collections that are free from access restrictions imposed by the donor. The materials will be accessible to the Museum staff and public under the current access guidelines of the Museum Archives (see the Museum Archives Access Policy for additional information).
- Expenses related to the arrangement, description and preservation of collections should be minimal or offset through donations, which will be solicited at the time of the gift or purchase of the related materials.
- The potential impact on Museum Archives staff and facilities will be measured when considering new acquisitions.
- The primary collecting scope will be materials in English, Spanish, French and German, from North America, South America, and Europe; this does not exclude collecting of materials in any other language or from any other geographical area.

As part of the review process, the Museum Archives works closely with MoMA curatorial staff, as appropriate. The Museum Archives also makes every effort to work collaboratively with other manuscript collecting repositories. In addition, it will direct potential donors to the most suitable institution, if the collection is not germane to its holdings.

A few examples of recent acquisitions of collections made under this policy are described below.

The Calvin Tomkins Papers are 7.6 linear meters. Tomkins exposes and interprets the arts and art world of our time to a broad audience through his numerous “Profiles” and articles for *The New Yorker*, as well as his books on twentieth-century artists, including his 1996 biography of Marcel Duchamp. Over the course of his career, which began with a post as an editor at *Newsweek* in 1955, he amassed a vast amount of research material for his writings, including over 500 files and 220 audiotapes of interviews. His papers chronicle a vital period in the New York art world (from the 1960s to the present) and document such key figures as John Cage, Leo Castelli, Christo, Duchamp, Roy Lichtenstein, Robert Rauschenberg, James Rosenquist, Richard Serra, Cindy Sherman, Frank Stella, and Andy Warhol.

The Richard Bellamy Papers are 12.5 linear meters. Bellamy, who died in 1998, was an influential and beloved art-world personality in New York from the late 1950s through the 1990s. At the Hansa Gallery for four years, Bellamy masterminded exhibitions of some of the earliest works by John Chamberlain, Allan Kaprow, Marisol, Lucas Samaras, and George Segal. In October 1960, Bellamy inaugurated the Green Gallery with backing from the collector Robert C. Scull. The Green Gallery existed at a critical moment in American art, when Abstract Expressionism was spawning the next generation of artistic movements, including Color Field painting, Pop art,

and Minimalism. Bellamy was responsible for showcasing work by emerging artists, giving many of them their first public exposure. Artists he represented during this period included Lee Bontecou, Jim Dine, Dan Flavin, Donald Judd, Yayoi Kusama, Robert Morris, and Claes Oldenburg.

We recently received the archives of the influential avant-garde magazine, *Avalanche*, that was published in New York City between 1970 and 1976. Edited by an artist, Willoughby Sharpe, who had first hand knowledge of other seminal artists of the time, the magazine is legendary for its innovative design and its collaboration with the artists that were featured within. Furthermore, it was the first arts journal to showcase the work of many young, emerging artists who are now considered “masters” of the period. The magazine includes features on: Vito Acconci, Carl Andre, Joseph Beuys, Gordon Matta-Clark, Bruce Nauman, and Robert Smithson. The *Avalanche* Archives include not only correspondence and other records, but also the full scale mock-ups of the magazine as well as over 200 audio tapes of interviews with artists, most of which were never published.

The Paul Rosenberg Archives is a promised gift to the MoMA Archives, which will come to the Museum upon the death of the donor. A key figure in the art world in the 1920s and '30s, Paul Rosenberg (1881–1959) supported and guided the careers of artists such as Pablo Picasso, Georges Braque, Fernand Léger, and Henri Matisse, exhibiting them alongside the Impressionist and Post-Impressionist masters of the day, and placing their works in the most renowned museums and private collections in the world. Chronicling nearly a century of the gallery, which was established in Paris by Rosenberg’s father in 1878 and moved to New York in 1941, the Paul Rosenberg Archives represent a unique assemblage of materials that are particularly rich for the study of early twentieth-century French art and critical for documenting the provenance of hundreds of paintings and sculptures that were looted by the Nazis in Paris in the early 1940s. The archives comprise numerous sale records, photographs of every work in the gallery’s inventory, correspondence, exhibition files, and photographs of installations.

Notwithstanding our urge to collect and augment our holdings of private archival materials, our collecting is severely limited due to a lack of adequate staffing and funding. Precisely because archival work is very labor intensive, the acquisition of a new collection demands a major commitment from us, so we must proceed cautiously. On average, the type of collections we acquire typically require work by one full-time employee for the duration of one year. The Museum of Modern Art Archives does not have a budget for acquisitions, therefore we seek gifts of materials and concurrently solicit monetary donations to use towards the staffing costs for processing and preserving the collections.

The access policies in regard to these non-MoMA materials are somewhat more lenient and broader than those applied to the institutional records. Whereas the Museum feels obligated to protect the privacy and confidentiality of certain documents that we have jurisdiction over, we are less stringent in denying access to documents that we had no part in creating, and that were donated or sold to

us. That is, if there are records relating to the sales of works of art to third parties, or if sensitive issues are discussed in correspondence between two third parties, we do not feel under obligation to withhold such information from the public domain. We do work closely with the donors of these outside collections, and should they wish to place any restrictions upon the materials, we are happy to honor them. This is also in line with common policy at the Archives of American Art, the largest single repository in the United States for such types of material. A few different examples of such practice will follow.

The 560 Broadway Collection documents the art collection, the collecting activities, and the exhibitions organized by Werner Kramarsky. Kramarsky recently donated these records to the MoMA Archives, and they are invaluable as they trace his some three decades of activity as a collector and exhibitor. He requested that all correspondence (predominately between him and individual artists) be restricted for 10 years, after which time it made be made freely available.

A second approach is evident with the Calvin Tomkins Papers. In this case, Tomkins has allowed the entirety of the collection to be open to researchers. However, he (and after his death his heirs and/or executors) reserves the right to review all potential publication of information generating from the collection, and he alone retains the rights to accept or deny a researcher's request to publish. This arrangement will last for twenty years after the date of donation, after which time the Museum will have the sole discretion to grant permission to publish. The motivation for this unique arrangement is that Tomkins felt that he gained many insights and access to documentation because of his well known ability to be discrete and fair. He is committed to researchers having the ability to study his material, but has retained this authority in order to screen out of public consumption (for the near future) any information that he deemed private and/or confidential.

A third scenario exists with respect to the Richard Bellamy Papers. Whereas with Museum documentation, we restrict information about purchase price of works of art for 25 years, or about condition, the son of Bellamy, from who we acquired the collection, was eager to have all the material available. Furthermore, the son had already frequently provided researchers unfettered access to the papers over many years. The materials are particularly useful in tracing past locations and owners of specific works of art. So we were reluctant to impose further restrictions on a collection which had already been made available to the public.

It is through utilizing the private archives, whether that be the MoMA institutional records, or the collections of papers created by private organizations or individuals outside of MoMA, that we can foster the dialogue and comprehension of art displayed in the public realm. Accessible to both Museum staff and the public, the Museum Archives is an international center of research for the study of modern and contemporary art. The MoMA Archives currently amounts to over 800 linear meters of institutional archives and manuscript collections (comprised of 170 individual collections or units), 190 linear meters of photographs, over 3,000 sound and video recordings of Museum-related events, and 1,300 linear meters of Records

Management materials. Users are informed of the Museum's archival resources through finding aids available on the Museum Archives website at: <http://www.moma.org/research/archives.html>.

