

Cheltenham Borough Council

Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum

Exhibitions Policy

Revised April 2008

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1 Introduction

This policy replaces the previous Exhibitions Policy, approved by Cheltenham Borough Council's Leisure Committee in 2003. It reflects the mission statement of Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum (CAG&M); and takes into account the findings from a visitor, non-visitor and stakeholder survey on preferences for the type and style of temporary exhibitions within the galleries. This survey was part of the Art Gallery & Museum's 2007 consultation campaign (funded by the MLA's Data Collection Project), which also included surveys on: A Review of Opening Hours, and Proposals for the Future Development / Expansion. The Exhibition Policy will deal with temporary exhibitions within / part of the Art Gallery & Museum only; and includes references to the Council's Business Plan - from 2008/09 onwards – and takes into account the *Building for a New Future* Development Scheme. The temporary exhibitions programme links into our (annual) Service Action Plan. The policy will be updated again in 2010.

1.1 Mission Statement:

To preserve and develop Cheltenham's unique collections for the future and to make them accessible to an increasingly broad public in a way that communicates, educates and inspires.

2 Policy Statement

2.1 Purpose:

Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum is committed to offering a varied programme of temporary exhibitions, which will contribute to the town as a popular cultural centre in both local and regional terms; and in line with the Council's Cultural Review Strategic Framework.

2.2 Background:

- Cheltenham Art Gallery & Museum has a long and successful history of showing a diverse temporary exhibitions programme.
- Exhibitions are programmed throughout the year – currently in two galleries: the de Ferrieres Gallery and Gallery 13 – with an average showing of 10 to 12 exhibitions per year, with a minimum duration of four weeks.
- The selection, number and range of exhibitions are presently determined by the Exhibitions & Education Manager – in consultation with the rest of the Art Gallery & Museum staff – and agreed at the Exhibitions & Education Team Meetings.

2.3 The need for temporary exhibitions:

- A changing programme of lively, informative and challenging exhibitions ensures that CAG&M can attract new and repeat audiences on a continuing basis, and provide a means for engaging with a broad visitor spectrum – whether this is local, regional or national.
- Temporary exhibitions permit and promote public access to groups of objects from external sources - which are privately owned or in study collections – and our collections (which may normally be kept in storage), as well as encouraging and promoting contemporary artists and craftspeople.
- Exhibitions can both raise awareness of specific areas from the permanent collections (local importance/ new acquisitions and / or research) and cover topics that are not represented within them (i.e. show links to major anniversaries or wider cultural events).
- Exhibitions can help profile and regenerate the creative industries economy, through the sale of works of art and crafts during exhibitions – and can also increase revenue for the shop and cafe.

3 Programming

3.1 As part of the exhibition programming we aim to:

- Provide a broad balanced programme of stimulating exhibitions – encompassing art, craft, design, history and issue-based material – to attract new audiences and encourage repeat visits.
- Encourage and promote equal opportunities by creating exhibitions which allow physical and intellectual access – via clear and understandable content labelling and educational opportunities.
- Underpin and animate all exhibitions through clear educational targets, promoting the educational potential of all exhibitions and provision of activities where appropriate.
- Challenge pre-conceptions and prejudice, and encourage engagement and involvement.
- Create a welcoming and stimulating environment for all visitors – regardless of race, class, gender or sexual orientation.
- Promote an awareness of other cultures and celebrate cultural diversity – supporting cultural cohesion.
- Develop new audiences locally and involve targeted communities – which encourage lifelong learning.
- Give local people the opportunity to experience temporary exhibitions of national and international importance.

- Complement the Art Gallery & Museum's permanent collections by enlarging on aspects already covered (i.e. on display), or by focusing on themes and objects omitted (i.e. not within our collections) – including displaying recently acquired items and material from the reserve collections.
- Generate or commission exhibitions that include local artists / makers – as a way of supporting their development and Gloucestershire Creative Industries.
- Work to best standards in conservation and security within the gallery environment.
- Continually improve the service by a process of monitoring and evaluation – including using statistics, public feedback and reviews.
- Promote the service to local, regional and national audiences, using a variety of marketing tools – including leaflets, press and specialist publications, radio and TV, mailing lists and the internet
- Work in partnership with individuals and organisations at local, regional and national levels - to provide specific shows for Cheltenham and / or for touring.

3.2 To achieve our aims we propose the following strategy:

- Revise the current selection process for the temporary exhibitions programme, including the revision of prescribed guidelines and exhibition criteria – based on the aims within this revised policy, and with links to the Audience Development Plan.
- Ensure that temporary exhibitions come from a variety of different sources. These may include:
 - **In-House:** Exhibitions created by CAG&M staff and / or guest curators. This type of exhibition is essential for showing our visitors the wealth of collections we have in store. It also provides an opportunity to show important research on the collections, and enables guest curators – who may range from specialists in their field or artists – to show the collections through inspiring, innovative and informative ways.
 - **Partnership:** Exhibitions created in partnership with CAG&M and another organisation, artist, curator, academic etc. This provides an opportunity to show something unique, highlight new research, address contemporary issues, initiate a touring show or bring nationally important works to Cheltenham.
 - **Touring Exhibitions:** Pre-curated / pre-organised exhibitions brought in from external sources. These would include organisations such as the Crafts Council, Arts Council, Design Museum, national galleries and museums, and the Touring Exhibitions Group (TEG). This enables the Art Gallery & Museum to show objects / works of art – not represented elsewhere in the collections – and to bring in shows of national importance.
 - **Group or Single Artist / Maker Exhibitions:** CAG&M may invite artists / makers or groups of artists / makers to exhibit or respond to direct approaches from them. Single artist / maker exhibitions will normally favour those with a proven association with Gloucestershire.
 - **Community Exhibitions:** Included in this category are all exhibitions which involve local people in the creation of exhibitions. This may form part of an educational or arts development initiative, be a response to local interest or need – or a celebration of local creativity. *Building for a New Future* will provide a specific gallery space to show this type of exhibition – however, as an interim measure (for use during the next two years) we are aiming to allocate a Community Gallery within the re-located café.

- Produce a new agreement to outline the responsibilities of the exhibitors and CAG&M staff – based on the revised prescribed guidelines and exhibitions criteria.
- Investigate the feasibility of providing a biennale open exhibition to showcase the work of local artists working in Gloucestershire. Because of the great demands on the current gallery space, we are proposing to organise a Cheltenham Open Show – which will provide CAG&M with a fair and democratic way to exhibit local artists' work. There will be a selection process, including an independent judging panel. The Open West will be on display on alternating years.

3.3 Funding:

- The current programme operates on a limited budget, often requiring an imaginative and flexible approach; and a small amount of additional fundraising. However, the temporary exhibitions programme for the new galleries (for example larger in-house shows and national touring exhibitions) will require substantial levels of funding. Therefore, we will need to consider seeking grants and sponsorship from external sources and partnership working through fundraising as a core activity for the exhibitions programme.

5 Partnerships

5.1 We aim to maintain and develop further links with various agencies:

- Providers of exhibitions: other galleries and organisations at local, regional, national and international levels, Touring Exhibitions Group (TEG), artists, makers and their representatives or groups, local clubs and societies.
- Education: Maintain and develop further links with both the formal and informal education sector – as users of the temporary exhibitions programme and as exhibition providers and partners, i.e. University of Gloucestershire.
- Maintain active involvement in local groups and consortia, including artist and maker groups i.e. Cheltenham Group of Artists (CGA), Gloucestershire Guild of Craftsman (GGC), and Gloucestershire Arts Framework (GAF).
- Develop partnerships with tourism organisations and the local business community – with a specific remit for Gloucestershire Creative Industries and links into the Cultural Entrepreneurs.
- Work with the Arts Development Team, colleagues in Cheltenham Borough Council and other organisations / individuals to tackle issues relevant to the wellbeing and cultural agenda
- Festivals and events: Cheltenham's renowned festivals offer opportunities for high profile cultural projects across the arts.
- Work with other venues / organisations – including the Pittville Studios and the Gardens Gallery.

6 Key milestones

6.1 The following key milestones are proposed for the period 2008 to 2010 and will:

- Provide a series of taster exhibitions - during the next two years - of the calibre we plan to show in the Exhibitions Off-Site programme and new temporary galleries, as part of the Development Scheme. Starting with *Surrealism Returns*; this in-house exhibition includes loans from national, regional and private lenders, and will be a significant marker for the Art Gallery & Museum - in terms of partnership working and fundraising.
- Develop an Audience Development plan – in conjunction with project planning for the building of the new Development Scheme.
To include:
 - **Further consultation** with the local community (visitors and non-visitors) and stakeholders, through the use of web-site based surveys, focus groups and the launch of an Exhibitions Forum and Outreach Working Group – to include internal and external partners.
 - **Exhibitions Off-Site:** When the building programme starts on the Development Scheme, the Art Gallery & Museum will be closed for a period of time. During the closure we plan to continue a temporary exhibitions programme within Cheltenham and the surrounding area – featuring ‘taster exhibitions’ and highlights from our permanent collections. This will be delivered in partnership with other venues and organisations – and will also include a working group combining arts development, education and lifelong learning.
- Develop new temporary exhibition galleries as one of the key features within the Development Scheme, *Building for a New Future* - of the size and standard to take larger regional / national touring shows. This will enable the Art Gallery & Museum to collaborate with regional and national galleries in organising specific exhibitions for Cheltenham, and will provide the town with a cultural centre of excellence for the visual arts.