



# COLLECTIONS POLICY

## **1. Purpose**

The Museum of Transology is dedicated to collecting, preserving, and exhibiting material culture that represent the history, culture, and experiences of transgender individuals. This collections policy outlines the principles and guidelines that govern the acquisition, care, and management of the museum's collections.

## **2. Scope of Collection**

The Museum of Transology collects material culture that relate to the transgender community, including but not limited to:

- Personal artifact and memorabilia
- Photographs and documents
- Artwork in any medium
- Clothing, accessories, and gender-affirming items
- Objects related to transgender activism, organizations, and events (for example flyers, placards, posters)
- Medical and scientific artifacts related to the individual's gender affirming care.
- Organic objects/samples (for example grass, sand, bird feathers)

Each donated item is accompanied with a handwritten brown label tag explaining the importance, relevance or significance of the object.

The scope of our collection is limited exclusively to physical, tangible objects. We do not actively seek out or accept into our collections any items that exist solely in digital or electronic form e.g. a GIF.

## **3 .Inventory and Collection Process**

At the time of donation the donor is required to fill in an Object Donation form.

Upon donation to the MoT, all objects undergo a documentation process. This includes capturing high-quality digital photographs of each item, recording precise measurements, and cataloging the objects in the museum's archival system.

Each object is given a unique identifier consisting of the year of acquisition, place of collection and a sequential number (e.g., MOT/2024/DUND/008).

The MoT staff provides training to Volunteer Archivists who are responsible for collecting and documenting inventory information for the museum's collection. These Volunteers work diligently to gather and organize data about each object, ensuring that the museum maintains a comprehensive and accurate inventory of its holdings

#### **4. Collection Criteria and Process**

The Museum of Transology collection consists entirely of community donated objects from individuals that self identify as transgender, nonbinary or intersex. The MoT does not in any way enforce what this means.

**4.1 Language:** The MoT recognises that language is deeply influenced by cultural, historical, and geographic contexts and that the terms used to describe transgender identities and experiences may vary widely across different communities and regions.

We acknowledge that the English language terms such as "transgender," "non-binary," or "gender non-conforming" are not universally used or embraced and may not fully encompass the diverse ways in which individuals understand and express their own gender identities.

We are committed to respecting and representing the self-identified terms and language preferred by our donors and the communities they represent. We encourage donors to share with us the specific words, phrases and concepts that most authentically reflect their lived experiences and cultural contexts.

**4.2 No Restrictions:** We believe in the power of sharing transgender stories without censorship. We do not place any restrictions on the content, message, or medium of donated physical objects, as long as they align with our mission of preserving and celebrating transgender, non binary and intersex histories.

**4.3 Provenance:** We kindly ask object donors to provide as much information as possible about an object's history and significance, but we understand that provenance may be limited or unknown for some community-donated items.

In line with our commitment to ethical and respectful collections practices, we have instituted a policy to ensure that objects of cultural significance are acquired in a manner that respects the rights and wishes of indigenous and First Nation communities.

If a prospective donor wishes to contribute an object that originates from a place, culture, or community to which they do not belong, particularly those items that hold significance for indigenous or First Nation peoples, we require express permission from the recognized representatives of the land upon which the object originated or the community to whom it is culturally tied.

This policy applies to all objects that fall under the jurisdiction of indigenous or First Nation lands, regardless of the current geographic location of the object or the individual offering the donation. We will work closely with prospective donors to facilitate dialogue with the appropriate representatives and to ensure that all acquisitions are conducted in a manner that prioritizes the sovereignty, cultural autonomy, and wishes of the indigenous or First Nation communities in question.

The MoT recognises that the right to grant permission for the stewardship of culturally significant objects ultimately resides with the indigenous or First Nation communities themselves. Should the express permission granted by indigenous or First Nation representatives be revoked at any point subsequent to the acquisition of an object, we are committed to the immediate repatriation of the item in question.

If the donor would like support from MoT staff with this process, we are happy to assist to the extent our resources permit.

In situations where the prospective donor is unable or unwilling to secure the necessary express permission from the recognized representatives of the indigenous or First Nation community to whom the object is culturally tied, we regret that we will be unable to proceed with the collection of the item.

We understand that this stance may disappoint some prospective donors who had hoped to contribute objects to our collection. However, we firmly believe that the principles of cultural sovereignty and respect must take precedence over the growth of our collection. We are committed to working only with donors who share these values and who are willing to engage in the necessary dialogue and consent-seeking process with indigenous and First Nation communities.

**4.4 Ethical Considerations:** While we aim to be as inclusive as possible, we do reserve the right to decline donations that raise significant ethical concerns, such as objects that could cause direct harm or violate the privacy of individuals.

**4.5 Ongoing Relationships:** We value the ongoing relationships with our donors and see them as integral partners in shaping our collection. We welcome continued engagement and are open to donors' input on how their objects are interpreted or displayed.

**4.6 Priority Donation Areas:** As a museum dedicated to preserving and sharing the rich history and material culture of transgender communities, we have identified the following priority areas for future collections:

1. Intersectional Transgender experiences: We actively seek objects that illuminate the diverse experiences of transgender, nonbinary and intersex individuals who identify as Black, Brown, Intersex, Disabled, or Older, as well as those who embody any number of these intersecting identities.
2. Early evidence of Trans, Non-Binary and Intersex lives: We have a strong interest in objects that provide insight into the long and often hidden history of transgender, non binary and intersex experiences in the past.

We believe that by focusing our collections development efforts on these priority areas, we can work towards building a more inclusive, representative, and socially just collection that honors the resilience, creativity, and contributions of transgender communities across time and space.

## **5. Collection Periods**

Following the successful completion of our recent collecting initiative in partnership with the Art Fund and the National Heritage Lottery Fund for the *TRANSCESTRY: 10 years of the Museum of Transology* exhibition, which saw community donations from 15 locations across the United Kingdom and Ireland, we are currently not actively collecting donations.

Our current focus is on carefully archiving and displaying these new collections.

As we move forward with the vital work of preserving and sharing the remarkable objects entrusted to our care, we remain committed to the responsible stewardship of our collection and to the enrichment of the cultural life of our community.

In rare instances, we may still collect incredibly significant objects, but this is at the discretion of MoT Curator E-J Scott, on a case by case basis.

All future MoT collection periods will be advertised, well in advance, on our website and social media accounts.

## **6. Inventory and Digital Documentation**

**6.1 Inventory:** The MoT uses a digital collections management system to store and manage object records.

Each object archived by the MoT has its digital description and keywords assigned by the donor who contributed it, ensuring that the donor retains agency in determining how their object will be publicly searchable within the archive.

To safeguard the privacy and anonymity of donors, the MoT adheres to a strict policy of omitting any personal or identifying details from the labeling and documentation of objects. This approach ensures that the focus remains on the historical and cultural significance of the items rather than on the individuals who contributed them.

**6.2 Digital Storage:** The MoT recognizes the importance of secure data storage and takes a multi-faceted approach to protect its digital records. The museum's collections database is stored using both cloud-based software and an external hard drive.

The cloud software provides a reliable, accessible, and regularly backed-up platform for data storage and retrieval. This allows authorized MoT team members to access the database remotely, facilitating collaboration and research efforts.

The MoT maintains a separate copy of the database on an external hard drive. This local backup ensures that the museum's data is protected against potential issues with the cloud service, such as outages or security breaches.

The MoT employs stringent access controls, ensuring that only authorized individuals can view, modify, or add to the collections database.

**6.3 Database:** As the MoT transitions into its archiving and display phase, we are committed to making our digital catalogue of the collection accessible to everyone through our website. This digital catalogue will be designed with user-friendly features, ensuring that it is both easily searchable and fully accessible to all visitors. By providing open access to our digital

catalog, we aim to promote transparency, facilitate research, and engage a wider audience in exploring and understanding the rich history and diverse experiences represented within our collection.

## **7. Care and Conservation**

The MoT is committed to upholding the highest standards of Collection Care and Conservation, as outlined by the Spectrum, UK Museum Collections Standard. Our collection is securely housed at the Bishopsgate Institute in London, UK, which ensures strict adherence to these standards on our behalf. When objects from our collection are displayed at other locations, such as Queer Britain, we work closely with these institutions to guarantee that they maintain the same rigorous standards of care and conservation. By consistently applying these best practices, we aim to preserve the integrity and longevity of our collection, ensuring that it remains accessible to future generations and continues to serve as a valuable resource for research, education, and cultural heritage.

## **8. Object Exhibitions**

8.1 The MoT may exhibit objects in other institutions for exhibition, research, or educational purposes.

For this to happen the exhibiting institution must meet the MoT's standards for collection care and conservation standards.

These objects will be handled and displayed according to the MoT's requirements.

When this process occurs, it will be accompanied by a written loan agreement detailing the terms and conditions (including but not limited to duration, cost, care, display and photography) of the loan as outlined by the Museum of Transology Loan Agreement Policy devised by MoT Registrar Claye Bowler.

8.2 In the event of damage to or theft of your donated item by an external party (for example a transphobic exhibition visitor), we will promptly notify you and keep you informed of any developments regarding your object's status.

## **9. Review and Revision**

**9.1. Regular review and update of the collections policy:** The collections policy will be reviewed and updated by the museum's staff and board of directors every three years.

The policy may be amended more frequently in response to changing circumstances, new ethical considerations, or updates to professional standards.

**9.2 Procedure for amending the policy:** Proposed amendments to the collections policy will be reviewed and approved by the museum's collections committee and Board of Trustees.

**9.3 Communication of changes to staff, stakeholders, and the public:** Changes to the collections policy will be communicated to museum staff through training sessions and written updates. Stakeholders, including donors and partner institutions, will be notified of

any significant changes to the policy. The updated collections policy will be made publicly available on the museum's website.