

I. Statement of Purpose

The Smithsonian Institution and the Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation (AHHP), Castle Collection (the Collection) recognizes the value of community representation in its collections, the benefit of preserving and making available to the public, with honor and respect, a diverse range of collections, stories, and histories, and the role of museums as collaborative custodians of cultural and historical legacies. The Castle Collection embraces the opportunity to work with all to ensure that its collections are contributing to a richer experience for everyone.

Founded in 1964 with the mission of interpreting the history and use of the Smithsonian Institution Building (the Castle), the Castle Collection has assembled a significant collection of nineteenth and early twentieth-century furniture, fine and decorative arts objects, and historic documents and images related to the Castle. The Collection believes that good collection stewardship is built on a foundation of trust between a museum and the public it serves to ensure that the work of museums and its collecting activities are conducted in a manner that is beyond reproach. Unethical acquisition fundamentally breaks the trust relationship between museums and the public.

Regarding its own collecting activities, the Collection resolves to:

- 1) Restore that trust. Whenever applicable, the Collection will work with all individuals and communities in an open and transparent way to diligently resolve any concerns, requests, or inquiries regarding unethical acquisitions.
- 2) Maintain that trust. The Collection will continue to ensure that its acquisitions are obtained only in the most legally and ethically appropriate manner.

All inquiries or requests should be made through the Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation's website at <https://ahhp.si.edu/contact-us>.

II. Applicability

The Office of Architectural History and Historic Preservation, Castle Collection's Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns Policy applies to all accessioned objects and their associated collection information and media within the Castle Collection.

III. Authority and Responsibilities

A. Overview and General Responsibilities

Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns Committee

The Director (AHHP), Curator and Registrar of the Castle Collection will work in committee as the Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns Committee (the Committee). Chaired by the Director (AHHP), the Committee will work in a spirit of consensus and will receive and review all inquiries, requests, and concerns concerning shared stewardship or ethical return related to the Collection. The Committee will determine the merits of all inquiries and requests and make recommendations to the OPDC Director. The Committee will address and implement the decisions regarding all inquiries and requests.

The Committee will be responsible for:

- Documenting the Committee's work and reviewing each inquiry and request.
- Overseeing the lifecycle of all shared stewardship and ethical returns requests and working in a timely manner to resolve all concerns, inquiries, and requests related to the Collection.
- Ensuring open communication with interested parties throughout the period of deliberation and determination.
- Establishing a resolution-oriented plan and schedule for resolving each request and communicating these schedules to interested parties.
- Consulting with Smithsonian offices, such as the Office of General Counsel (OGC), the National Collections Program (NCP), the Office of International Relations (OIR), and the Office of the Under Secretary for Administration, and other Smithsonian collecting units to ensure policy compliance and consistent decision-making.
- Reporting recommendations and determinations to the Director, Office of Planning, Design and Construction (OPDC).
- To ensure currency, reviewing, developing and modifying guidelines and procedures for Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns.
- Communicating final determinations to the inquiring or requesting parties after all consultations and approvals required by SD 600.

As Chair of the Committee, the Director (AHHP) will be responsible for:

- Ensuring the Committee completes its work and maintains projected schedules and deadlines.
- Assigning additional AHHP or Castle Collection staff to assist the Committee in its work.
- Determining resource needs and, if necessary, requesting from the Director (OPDC) additional resources be allocated to the Committee.

- Ensuring that implementing the Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns policy and committee membership in the Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns Committee is included in the annual plans for unit staff.
- Ensuring that Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns are addressed in the unit's Strategic and Collection Plans.

Director, Office of Planning, Design and Construction (OPDC)

The Director (OPDC) will be responsible for:

- Reviewing additional resource requests and, if necessary, attempting to secure those additional resources for the Committee.
- Reviewing the recommendations or determinations of the Committee.
- Making final decisions regarding requests in consultation with the Under Secretary for Administration.

Under Secretary for Administration

The Under Secretary for Administration will:

- Consult with the Committee and the Director (OPDC) regarding disposition of requests.

B. Addressing an Inquiry or Request

The Committee will develop a plan for research and meeting and project schedules for addressing and researching the inquiry or request in a timely manner.

Registrar's responsibilities:

- Acknowledging the inquiry or request to the interested parties, in writing, within 14 days of receipt to the Committee.

Submitting the inquiry for tracking in the Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns Request Tracking System found at this link <https://sinet.sharepoint.com/sites/SIEthicalReturns/SitePages/Home.aspx>

C. Decision-Making

The Committee will make a recommendation in writing to the Director (OPDC) regarding disposition of the request. The Director (OPDC) will review the recommendation of the Committee, make a final decision regarding disposition of the request, and then consult with the Under Secretary for Administration.

As Chair of the Committee, the Director (AHHP) will:

- Determine resource needs for completing the review of the merits of the inquiry or request and anticipate the potential resources necessary for effecting either a Shared Stewardship Agreement or Ethical Return.
- Communicate the recommendations or determinations of the Committee to the Director (OPDC).

Curator's responsibilities:

- Reporting to the Committee on the affected object(s) and the known facts and circumstances regarding acquisition through the chain of ownership.

Registrar's responsibilities:

- Reviewing collection object(s) records and identifying any possible restrictions related to the object(s) that would prevent either the shared stewardship or ethical return of the collection object(s).
- As necessary, consulting with the National Collections Program, the Office of General Counsel, and the Office of International Relations, or other Smithsonian collecting units with similar collections or situations to ensure that a consistent and equitable resolution is made.
- Reviewing the merits of each request in a meaningful and comprehensive way by researching the request and determining all interested parties and groups.
- Developing and presenting to the Committee a written report regarding the merits of each inquiry or request.

D. Implementing the Decision

The Committee will:

- Be responsible for implementing the shared stewardship or ethical return decision or denial.
 - In the event of an approved ethical return, the Committee will instruct the registrar to proceed with the [SD600](#) and the Collection's Collection Management Policy requirements, procedures, and approvals, for deaccessioning the collection object(s).
 - In the event of a Shared Stewardship Agreement, the Committee will consult and receive the necessary approvals as outlined in SD 600 and the [Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns Policy](#).
- Communicate the final determinations to the interested parties.
 - For denied requests, following consultation with the Under Secretary for Administration, the Committee Chair will communicate the denial in writing to the requester and explain the rationale of the decision.

IV. Evaluation Criteria for Shared Stewardship and Ethical Returns

Each request or inquiry brought to the Committee will be reviewed comprehensively. The Committee will gather information, consult with the requesting or inquiring party, and conduct provenance research.

The Committee will consider the following criteria to evaluate requests for shared stewardship and ethical return:

- Is the requesting party the most appropriate party to make the inquiry or request? This determination will be made by considering the following:
 - What is the nature of the requester's relationship to the object(s)?
 - Does the requester have authority to act on behalf of the party seeking shared stewardship or return (e.g., the family, community, cultural group, tribe, or government)?
 - Are there competing inquiries or requests, or other parties with potential interests in the object(s)?
- Is the request an appropriate case for return or shared stewardship based on ethical considerations? This determination will be made by considering the following:
 - How was the object(s) originally acquired?
 - Is there evidence that the object(s) was acquired under duress, through coercion, without consent from the proper parties, or involuntarily?
 - Would the Castle Collection's continued possession of the disputed object perpetuate harm?
 - Would shared stewardship or ethical return fundamentally redress harms?

When evaluating any request or inquiry, the Committee will not consider the requesting party's ability to financially provide for the Smithsonian's standards of care for the objects.