

Collection Management Policy

Terramar Museum Bonaire, 2016 – 2021



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1. Introduction and mission statement

This document contains Terramar Museum's collection management policy for the period 2016 – 2021. The aim of the collection management policy is to inform the public, sponsors, heritage professionals, its employees, and other institutions about the museum's policies that guide the care and development of its collection. As the museum's collection forms a significant public inheritance, it is the museum's duty to acquire, preserve, and promote the collection as a contribution to safeguarding cultural heritage. Terramar Museum acknowledges the ICOM Code of Ethics and adheres to its guidelines. With regards to collections, the Code of Ethics states that "The Governing body for each museum should adopt and publish a written collections policy that addresses the acquisition, care and use of collections."

As of August 5, 2016 Terramar Museum is the newest addition to Bonaire's cultural infrastructure. It is different from other Bonairean and Caribbean archaeological and historical museums in that Terramar Museum's aim is not just to exhibit the history and archaeology of the island on which the museum is established, nor is its aim to exhibit just one or a limited number of aspects of history. The exhibitions at Terramar Museum will focus on the entire Caribbean region from its first colonization by humans c. 7,000 years ago to the twentieth century. As a result, a wide range of objects from all over the (Circum-)Caribbean are on display throughout the museum. These play a crucial role in telling the story of the history of Bonaire and the Caribbean.

Terramar Museum is directed, exploited, and managed through a Bonairean foundation – Stichting Terramar Museum – established in October 2014 specifically for these purposes. The aims of the foundation are to increase the interest in and the study of the archaeology, history, culture, and folklore of Bonaire and the Caribbean region.

The foundation achieves these goals through:

- exploiting a museum
- exhibiting, conserving, and studying archaeological, historical, cultural, and documentary artifacts
- organizing events, temporary exhibitions, lectures, and presentations
- making knowledge and research results available to the general public through various media

2. Description of the collection

2.1 Collection history

Terramar Museum was founded without a collection of its own. As a result, the museum is almost entirely dependent on object loans and donations. Institutions that have thus far provided Terramar Museum with long-term loans are the Florida Museum of Natural History (FLMNH), the St. Eustatius Center for Archaeological Research (SECAR), and the National Archaeological and Anthropological Memory Management (NAAM) from Curaçao. These were received in 2015. Private individuals have also provided objects for long-term loans in 2015 and 2016.

2.2 Extent of collection

The collection on display at Terramar Museum, at the time of writing consisting of some 150 objects, is extremely varied and can be divided into several components. Amerindian objects spanning nearly 7,000 years of human history include stone, shell, and flint tools, ceramic vessels and fragments, artifacts of personal adornment such as figurines and beads, and ritual objects and paraphernalia such as ceramic adornos, a threepointer *zemi*, and a cohoba pestle. Objects dating to the colonial period include clay tobacco pipes, glass slave beads, slave shackles, and Spanish olive jars. Objects found in underwater contexts and on historic shipwreck sites include glass wine bottles, ceramic gin bottles, personal objects of sailors such as shoes, cups, and cutlery, and ship parts such as wooden pulleys and iron nails. Objects in Terramar Museum's collection come from a wide variety of islands and countries throughout the Caribbean, including Bonaire, Curaçao, St. Eustatius, the Dominican Republic, Antigua, Jamaica, Martinique, Haiti, the Bahamas, Venezuela, and Grenada.

3. Use of the collection

3.1 Fixed exhibitions

The collection of Terramar Museum, consisting exclusively of long-term loans at the time of writing, is displayed in its entirety in the fixed exhibitions. All of the museum's public spaces, with the exception of the entrance which houses temporary exhibitions, are dedicated to the fixed exhibitions.

The objects in these exhibitions are used to add a material dimension to the information and stories found on the accompanying information panels. Moreover, partly due to accompanying object labels, the objects themselves add information to the story as well, and provide a direct link between the people who made, used, and discarded them and these people's stories which are told throughout the exhibitions. As a whole, the collection represents 7,000 years of human habitation history in the Caribbean region. More specifically, it shows, among other things, the diversity of material culture, mobility and exchange networks over vast distances, and processes of acculturation and assimilation between people from different continents and various ethnic and cultural backgrounds.

3.2 Temporary exhibitions

For temporary exhibitions or special events, parts of the collection can be rearranged or new loans can be requested from other institutions or private parties. Objects displayed in temporary exhibitions will be used to highlight a specific topic, time period, or event in Caribbean history.

3.3 Research

An important aspect of the museum's mission is to further the study of the archaeology and history of the Caribbean region. As such, the museum is actively involved in research activities and welcomes researchers to use its facilities. The museum has, however, a strict policy regarding use of the collection for research purposes. Those objects that are on loan are not allowed to be removed from the protective environment of the display cases they are exhibited in, nor is it allowed to touch, sample, or handle them in any way so as to ensure that the objects will return to the borrowing institution exactly the way they were received. It is, of course, possible for researchers to visually examine these objects while they remain in the display cases. Terramar Museum can assist in providing any information that is necessary for the study of certain objects.

Requests to study objects that belong to Terramar Museum's own collection will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. The museum encourages the non-destructive or minimally invasive study and

analysis of objects in its own collection. The museum shall encourage and support activities that increase awareness and understanding of its collection, particularly to the general public.

4. Care of the collection

The mission of Terramar Museum requires the care of objects in its collection. These objects, including those on loan, shall be conserved in accordance with the highest possible standards in a safe and appropriate environment with effective security measures.

4.1 Registration and documentation

The Curator is charged with the care of all objects in the museum's collection and shall maintain accurate and up-to-date documentation on everything that happens to objects in its collection. All objects in the museum's collection are documented and receive a registration number. This information is backed up digitally as well as in hardcopy. Documentation consists of the following information:

- Registration number
- Photographs from various angles
- Type of object
- Previous use and ownership history of object
- Age of object
- Dimensions of object in millimeters
- State of preservation
- Detailed description of object
- Location and way of exhibiting the object

4.2 Objects on display

Various measures are in place to ensure the safety of objects on display. All windows are covered by wooden shutters and burglar-proof insulating glass. A guard is present on the Terramar complex from 8pm to 6am to ensure safety on the premises. The museum building is equipped with an audible alarm that is triggered through motion sensors once someone tries to break in. This alarm is linked to the emergency services via telephone connection, which are automatically notified when the alarm goes off. Inside, the museum is equipped with CCTV cameras to deter theft and vandalism and to document the activities of people inside. All objects are displayed in locked glass display cases, most of which are mounted on solid oak tables and none of which can be opened without keys or the use of excessive force.

Bonaire has a relatively stable climate which is characterized by hot, dry, and sunny days with little rainfall throughout the year. As a result, atmospheric conditions are relatively stable. The entire museum is air-conditioned in order to create a stable environment for objects in the collection.

Furthermore, the museum's windows and doors are kept closed as much as possible to prevent dust and dirt from contaminating the exhibitions and the objects on display.

All objects in the museum's possession are insured for their full monetary value as established by the owner against theft, vandalism, or any other calamity such as fire or water damage.

4.3 Objects in storage

Any future acquisitions that will not be on display will be stored in a safe in the office inside the museum building. This room and the objects it houses are subjected to the same safety measures as described for the rest of the museum in section 4.2.

5. Enlarging and reducing the collection

5.1 Acquisitions

It is the museum's goal to gather a collection of its own throughout the years by object donations and by acquisition. Acquisitions will only be made if the provenance of an object is properly established and it is clear the object has not been acquired by theft or illegal trafficking, or originally acquired by looting archaeological sites. To this effect, the museum shall rigorously research the provenance of the proposed acquisition and obtain from sellers all available information and documentation with respect to the ownership history of the object. Museum acquisitions must comply with all applicable local, national, and international laws.

Acquisitions will only be made if the object can be used to fulfill the aims of the foundation and fit the permanent exhibition or can be used in lectures, events, or newly designed fixed or temporary exhibitions. The museum must be able to display, store, and care for the proposed acquisition according to generally accepted museum practices. Acquisitions can only be made with the approval of the foundation board.

For all purchases, the curator responsible for the purchase writes a detailed report which includes a description of the work, its condition, its history as far as this is known, its provenance, its relevance to the museum's mission and collection, and the intentions for display. All acquisitions made by the museum will be published in the yearly report with at least a photograph and a short description.

5.2 Loans

Terramar Museum is willing to accept long- and short-term loans as long as these can be used to fulfill the aims of the foundation and fit the permanent exhibition or can be used in lectures, events, or newly designed fixed or temporary exhibitions. Loans will only be accepted if the provenance of an object is properly established and it is clear the object has not been acquired by theft or illegal trafficking, or originally acquired by looting archaeological sites. Loans will only be accepted if the museum is able to display, store, and care for the proposed loan according to generally accepted museum practices. All incoming loans will be acknowledged in the museum's yearly report. Incoming loans will fall under Terramar Museum's insurance whereby they will be insured for their full monetary value as established by the owner against theft, vandalism, or any other calamity such as fire or water damage for the full duration of the loan.

Outgoing loan requests for objects in the museum's own future collection will be considered on a case by case basis. The receiving institution should fill out an outgoing loan request application form and submit a facility report and collection management policy which will be used to evaluate the

loan request. All outgoing loans will remain the property of Terramar Museum for the duration of the loan term. Outgoing loans can be requested to be returned should this be deemed necessary. Return requests by Terramar Museum should be handled by the receiving institution within 4 weeks.

5.3 Object donations

Terramar Museum is willing to accept object donations as long as these can be used to fulfill the aims of the foundation and fit the permanent exhibition or can be used in lectures, events, or newly designed fixed or temporary exhibitions. Donations will only be accepted if the provenance of an object is properly established and it is clear the object has not been acquired by theft or illegal trafficking, or originally acquired by looting archaeological sites. To this effect, the museum shall rigorously research the provenance of the proposed donation and obtain from donors all available information and documentation with respect to the ownership history of the object.

Object donations will only be accepted if the museum is able to display, store, and care for the proposed donation according to generally accepted museum practices. The museum generally does not accept restrictions on donations, and requires donors to transfer all rights of reproduction unless the donor does not own such rights.

For all donations, the curator recommending acceptance writes a detailed report which includes a description of the work, its condition, its history as far as this is known, its provenance, its relevance to the museum's mission and collection, and the intentions for display. All object donations accepted by the museum will be published in the yearly report with at least a photograph and a short description.

5.4 Deaccessioning

An object in the museum's collection can be removed and considered for disposal by sale, exchange, or other means. Deaccessioning of an object can only be done if:

- The museum is unable to conserve the object in a responsible manner
- The object is unduly difficult or impossible to care for or store properly
- The museum determines that deaccessioning or the return of the object to the previous owner is in the best interest of the museum

All funds received from deaccessioned works shall be used to support the aims of the museum. No employee, board member, or volunteer of the museum may purchase deaccessioned objects directly from the museum or at auction if consigned by the museum.