

**THE BURRELL COLLECTION (LENDING)
DRAFT PROVISIONAL ORDER
PRECOGNITION OF NEIL MACGREGOR
OF THE NATIONAL GALLERY**

1. Biographical details

1.1 My name is Robert Neil MacGregor and I have been the Directors of the National, London since 1987

1.2 My other relevant experience includes the following:-

- MA with distinction from the Courtauld Institute of Art
- Lecturer in history of Arts and Architecture at the University of Reading 1975 - 1981
- Editor of the Burlington Magazine 1981 - 1987
- Trustee of the Raad Van Ibezicht of the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam since 1995
- Member of UNESCO Advisory Group of the Hermitage, St Petersburg
- member of Visiting Committee of the J Paul Getty Museum, Malibu
- Chairman of the United Kingdom, Conference of national Museum Directors and of the European Commission Steering Committee for Multimedia Access and European Cultural Patrimony

2. Purpose of Evidence

2.1 I have been asked to give evidence on the practice of inter-gallery lending in both the domestic and the international context in terms of its prevalence, its purposes, its effects and its risks in the hope that this will assist the Commissioners in understanding the issues.

2.2 Although I have been called as a witness by the Promoters, I should like to make it clear that I neither support nor oppose the specific proposal that Glasgow City Council should be allowed to lend abroad objects from the Burrell Collection. On that my position is one of neutrality.

3. Overview of lending practices in the art world

3.1 The rhythm of borrowing and lending among galleries within the UK and internationally has increased hugely since the 1950's. This is largely due to the phenomenon of temporary loan exhibitions in permanent collections world wide.

3.2 Commonly, a gallery will hold an exhibition of relevance to its own permanent collection which increases understanding and academic interest in that collection. This enables an institution to publish and to work on its permanent collection. Focused loan exhibitions, therefore, illuminate and encourage research on the permanent collection.

3.3 Recent examples of temporary loan exhibitions in the National Gallery are as follows:

- The Wilton Diptych 1993
- Spanish Shill Life 1995
- Late Degas 1996

All required means loans from abroad and these had to be negotiated in a spirit of long term reciprocity

3.4 To my knowledge, there is no major art collection in the world which is able to lend and to borrow and chooses not to. There are a number of permanent collections which cannot lend at all or which are restricted in

their lending such as the Burrell Collection. Other examples of such collections are the Isabella Stewart Gardner Museum in Boston and the Frick Collection in New York. In the case of the Gardner Museum, the collection must be displayed as directed by the late Ms Gardner and that arrangement may not be disturbed. The Frick Collection is restricted in that it may not lend works acquired by Ms Frick. Both of these collections have moved towards small in-house loan exhibitions to supplement their revenue and both have sought to interpret the restraints on their lending as flexibly as possible.

4. Lending and reciprocity

- 4.1 Inter-gallery loans are usually made free of charge, although some countries such as Korea and Japan can afford to buy in exhibitions. There is, however, no incentive to lend from a collection unless there is some expectation of a reciprocal benefit. In the case of trustees of public collections, the trustees will usually lend only when it is in the public interest to do so. This will normally be the case only where a return benefit as a gain in scholarship is anticipated. The Burrell Collection may, therefore, be seriously handicapped as borrowers from public collections abroad by its inability to reciprocate for the benefit of that gallery's "public".
- 4.2 Directly reciprocal loans are the exception rather than the rule. The concept of reciprocity in the art world is more an assumption of long term exchanges and benefits.
- 4.3 One of the main benefits of such lending and borrowing is increased public attendance, both through the local population's visiting the temporary exhibition at the borrowing museum and through increased exposure for the lending collection further afield.

5. Joint exhibitions

Where two or more institutions organise an exhibition comprised predominantly of works from each, that exhibition will generally be hosted by those institutions only and will not go elsewhere. For example, the Rembrandt exhibition 1991 - 1992 went to Berlin, Amsterdam and London.

6. Measures of the benefits of lending/borrowing

Visitor figures are stimulated by loan exhibitions. They are also important for art publishing as people tend to buy books at exhibitions in greater numbers than they do at book shops without such a stimulus. Recent National Gallery examples including the following:-

	Exhibition	Visitor Numbers	Catalogue Sales
1.	Wilton Diptych 1993	103,639	9,058
2.	Spanish Still Life 1995	127,000	16,901
3.	Late Degas 1996	103,630	28,282

7. Overseas lending

7.1 I am aware of no evidence of a risk differential between domestic and overseas lending, especially when the overseas lending in question is to Western Europe or the United States. The passage from the wall to the packing case is widely considered to be the most dangerous stage of art transport.

7.2 Some objects are less likely to be fit to travel than others. Pastels and works on wood are examples. There is, however, no category of work which can never, as a hard and fast rule, be lent. It is standard practice to assess each individual object separately.

7.3 In considering a loan request a gallery must first decide whether the piece

requested is fit to travel. For example, a proposed exhibition of the Unce Uccella "Battles of San Romano" proved quite impossible: none of the panels could leave these museums for conservation reasons.

- 7.4 There are certain items which Trustees of a collection may consider to be national icons or of such outstanding national importance that a gallery would never lend them overseas. The "Wilton Diptych" in the National Gallery might be such a case. This consideration seems unlikely, however, to apply to any of the pieces in the Burrell Collection.

The National Gallery would also consider the fact that certain borrowing institutions are less reliable than others in terms of their security, handling record etc. Political considerations, if they gave rise to greater risks, might also enter into the decision of whether to lend. These decisions are taken by the National Gallery's trustees on a case by case basis according to the circumstances of the day.

8. National Gallery policy with regard to restrictive gifts/bequests

- 8.1 The National Gallery has been empowered to lend in contravention of the terms of a gift/bequest since the enactment of The National Gallery (Loans) Act 1883. The Gallery is currently empowered to loan items under The Museums and Galleries Act 1992.

- 8.2 Under section 5(3) of the 1992 Act, where an object has become vested in the National Gallery trustees subject to a trust or a condition, the power to lend is exercisable in a manner inconsistent with the trust or condition if either:

- (a) 50 years have elapsed since the date on which the property became so vested in the Board or in any person through whom the Board derives title to the relevant object; or

(b) the person who imposed the trust or condition has or his personal representatives have consented in writing to the exercise of the power in that manner.

8.3 In practice, The National Gallery has not yet exercised its power under the 1992 Act. Rather the Gallery has sought - particularly in the 19th Century to ensure that restrictions imposed should not be unduly onerous, or exclusively limiting to the Trustees' future discretion.

