

Recommended Methods For Collecting Social Forms of Art

These ideas developed through conversation with artists and curators - Chanon Kenji Praepipatmongkol, Han Xuemei, Ila, Kok Heng Leun, Li Xie, Zarina Muhammad, Alecia Neo, Eugene Tan, Teng Yen Hui, Shaiful Risan, Alfian Sa'at, anGie Seah, Vithya Subramaniam, Woon Tien Wei, and June Yap.

By Salty Xi Jie Ng, Dec 2021

Some questions:

How can you collect human touch? essence? that which resists collection?

Who and what gets to be acquired?

What is the relationship between collection and archive?

What is the artist's intention for the work to be acquired?

How can the act of collection be an opportunity to challenge the power of the art museum and demystify art historical and canonizing processes?

What is your relationship with time?

Depending on where the intentions, desires, and resources of artists and museum intersect, the museum can:

Acquire the collaborative artwork.

e.g. collaborative video or sculpture made together by a group of participants, or an individual piece from the collective whole

Acquire a relic of the participatory/collaborative process.

e.g. a paper cup someone drank from, a sketch someone made. Depending on the object, this can play with the tension between collection and archive as well as potentially mock the act of collection, rendering it absurd. OR point to an overlooked but deeply meaningful part of the process.

Acquire a score for re-activation of the work.

e.g. detailed instructions that an artist might furnish for curators/cultural producers/artists to recreate the work [e.g. Amanda Heng's *Let's Chat*, or Heman Chong & Renée Staal's *The Library of Unread Books*]

Acquire a score for audiences to perform a creative act(s) that speak to the intention of the artist(s) in the original work.

e.g. as in the case of Han Xuemei's *The Gift*, the score can be to pick the last gift you want to present to someone in your life, which was the prompt given to project participants.

Acquire a set of instructions for the museum to perform as a way of reflecting on and challenging the museum's relationship with artists, social forms of art, and traditional modes of collection.

On top (or instead) of an acquisition fee, the museum performs this set of instructions as part of the exchange. The acquisition is hence not entirely based on the museum's monetary power and the artist's ability and desire to price their work. e.g. as in the case of Post-Museum's *Really Really Free Market*, the museum can be instructed to host editions regularly as a way of bringing alternative practices and people into its space, as well as providing a service to the public.

A version of this is the acquisition fee going to the ongoing maintenance of the work, or to particular organisations/causes related to the work — here the museum is providing resources to sustain the values espoused by the work as manifested in the world in other ways. e.g. acquiring Alecia Neo's *Between Earth & Sky* could include fees partially going support organisations benefitting caregivers.

Something in between.

Leaving room for the impossibility of collecting social forms of art, and/or the nuanced imagination required.

A combination of the above.