

The CNAA collection: history and context

Introduction

The collection was created to celebrate the history and achievements of Britain's art schools. It is made up of works by international artists who worked in the UK and taught in its art schools. It was assembled by one higher education accrediting body (the NCDAD - National Council for Diplomas in Art and Design) and gifted to another (the CNAA - Council for National Academic Awards), in 1974. The gift, of large and uncompromising contemporary artworks, stood as a declaration of the significance of higher education in art and design practice in the UK.

A trust was formed in 1993 to assume responsibility for maintaining the refurbished collection, mounting public exhibitions and publishing catalogues. The trust convened seminars and oversaw the display of works from the collection in higher education institutions; it also formed the nucleus of a national online collection celebrating the history and continuing achievements of higher education in fine art practice in the UK (fineart.ac.uk). The University of London has agreed to display and maintain the CNAA collection: this microsite includes some contextual and historical information to convey a sense of the collection's origin and significance.

Sources

The information on this microsite is drawn from the archives of the CNAA trust, including:

- catalogue to the exhibition of the CNAA Collection held at the John Jones Gallery, Finsbury Park, in 1990;
- catalogue to the exhibition of the CNAA Collection held at the Wingfield Gallery, Wingfield, in 1999;
- catalogue of works in the CNAA Collection that forms the nucleus of the website <http://fineart.ac.uk>, created with JISC funding and launched in 2003. Specifically, a revision to the text of the essay "Celebrating the achievement of the art schools: a new resource".