



City of Arts & Innovation

Metropolitan Museum Board

TO: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM BOARD
FROM: MUSEUM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE
SUBJECT: ACCESSION OF WINNOWING MACHINE

DATE: NOVEMBER 8, 2017

ISSUE:

Accession of winnowing machine found in collections in order to immediately deaccession.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum Board vote to formally accession a winnowing machine found in collections.

BACKGROUND:

Curatorial staff discovered a winnowing (fanning) machine in the collections storage facility that has been badly damaged by termites. This wooden agricultural machine was used for separating grain from chaff.

The Curator of History is concerned about the threat posed by the piece relative to pests. He has also judged the piece to meet the second criteria for deaccession:

2. The object/specimen lacks physical integrity or is deteriorated beyond usefulness. Irretrievable damage or loss is defined as destruction of the essential structure or identifying characteristics of an object through action of mechanical, chemical or biological agents, vandalism, disaster or use of an object in destructive scientific sample testing.

The Curator of History discovered that the piece was likely never formally accessioned when the collection was purchased in 1969. As a result, the museum must treat the object as “found in collections” and formally accession it before it can deaccession and dispose of the piece through either transfer to a like institution or destruction.

The Museum Collections Committee motioned at its October 11, 2017 meeting to accession the winnowing machine and then made a secondary motion to deaccess the winnowing machine from collections.

DISCUSSION:

Why do we have to accession this piece when we want to deaccession it?

Best practices for the museum field hold that an item that has been in the museum's possession as long as this piece be treated as a museum object, though it was likely never accessioned. Museum policy stipulates that found-in-collections items be treated the same as gifts for accession. Given the length of time since the museum acquired the piece, it cannot be returned to its previous owner if rejected and therefore must be accessioned into the collection.

What will become of the piece next?

The Curator of History is immediately proposing the deaccession of the piece for either transfer or destruction upon its accession into the collection.

Images of winnowing machine



FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund.

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