



City of Arts & Innovation

Metropolitan Museum Board

TO: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM BOARD

DATE: NOVEMBER 8, 2017

FROM: MUSEUM COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: DEACCESSION OF WINNOWING MACHINE

ISSUE:

Deaccession a winnowing machine by either transfer to a like institution or destruction.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Museum Board vote to formally deaccession a winnowing machine found in collections by either transfer to a like institution or destruction.

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. Irrecoverable 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 had to treat the object as “found in collections” and formally accessioned it before bringing it up for deaccession and disposal through either transfer to a like institution or destruction.

The Museum Collections Committee, at its October 11, 2017 meeting, voted to accession the winnowing machine and then to deaccess the winnowing machine from collections.

DISCUSSION:

Why did 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 as a gift and therefore must be accessioned into the collection.

What will become of the piece next?

In accordance with museum field best practices and museum policy, the Curator of History will contact a number of local museums as well as regional agricultural museums to see if any would like to take on the piece as a restoration project. Should they not, he will oversee the physical destruction of the piece.

Images of winnowing machine



FISCAL IMPACT:

There is no fiscal impact to the General Fund.

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