



Metropolitan Museum Board Memorandum

City of Arts & Innovation

TO: METROPOLITAN MUSEUM BOARD **DATE: OCTOBER 23, 2019**

FROM: MUSEUM DEPARTMENT COLLECTIONS COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: DEACCESSION OF MEIER COLLECTION BILLIARD ROOM FURNISHINGS INCLUDING A BILLIARD TABLE (A1496-108.1), SIX (6) STOOLS (A1496-108.2), TWO (2) RACKS (A1496-108.3), 12 BILLIARD CUE AND EXTENDER STICKS (A1496-108.4), POCKET POOL ADAPTERS WITH WOODEN BOX (A1486-108.6), ONE (1) HANGING LAMP (A1496-108.110), AND A SCOREBOARD WITHOUT AN ACCESSION NUMBER

ISSUE:

Recommend that the City Council approve the deaccession of a billiard table (A1496-108.1) and associated items including six (6) stools (A1496-108.2), two (2) racks (A1496-108.3), 12 billiard cue and extender sticks (A1496-108.4), pocket pool adapters with wooden box (A1496-108.6), one (1) hanging lamp (A1496-108.110), and a scoreboard without an accession number.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Metropolitan Museum Board recommend that the City Council approve the deaccession of a billiard table (A1496-108.1) and associated items including six (6) stools (A1496-108.2), two (2) racks (A1496-108.3), 12 billiard cue and extender sticks (A1496-108.4), pocket pool adapters with wooden box (A1496-108.6), one (1) hanging lamp (A1496-108.110), and a scoreboard without an accession number.

BACKGROUND:

In December 1994, the Museum Department (Museum) took possession of and accessioned a billiard table (A1496-108.1) and associated items including six (6) stools (A1496-108.2), two (2) racks (A1496-108.3), 12 billiard cue and extender sticks (A1496-108.4), pocket pool adapters with wooden box (A1496-108.6), one (1) hanging lamp (A1496-108.110), and scoreboard without an accession number. This collection came from the Duarte (Los Angeles County), California, home of William Baird through a donation of Herbert and Margaret Meier. Mrs. Meier was the daughter of William Baird. The billiard table is stamped as having been constructed in the 1960s and is not from the historic period identified as Riverside's citrus-growing heyday.

Billiard table, chairs, pendant lamp, and other accoutrements.



Pendant lamp



Example of chair



Example of rack



Scoreboard



The entire Meier donation was accepted by the Museum to be held temporarily, with its future disposition to be in a proposed recreated mansion within the California State Citrus Heritage Park in Riverside, according to the Curator of History for the Museum at the time. In an email dated March 28, 2018, the Curator of History at that time stated, “the Meier Collection, especially the billiard table and [light] fixture ... was to go into the Large Grower Estate residence once established. ... These items came to the RMM for accessioning and storage pending full build-out of the Park, whereupon we would properly transfer designated artifacts and items to the State.” This recommendation represents a portion of the original Meier donation.

DISCUSSION:

The objects were donated in 1994 and have not yet been transferred to the California State Citrus Heritage Park (CSCHP) in Riverside for the originally intended use in the “Large Grower Estate residence” in the twenty-five (25) years the Museum has provided stewardship. They were slated for a facility that is included in portions of the CSCHP’s master plan that has not yet been developed. There is no expectation that this transfer will take place, and Museum staff has determined that the current situation is unlikely to change in a reasonable span of time. The CSCHP has been contacted regarding the Museum’s intention to deaccession the items and has declined to assume ownership of the billiard table and associated furnishings.

The billiard table, six (6) stools, two (2) racks, billiard cue and extender sticks, hanging lamp, and scoreboard fit deaccession criteria within the Museum’s Collections and Exhibitions Management Policies as highlighted below:

1. The object/specimen has failed to retain its identity or authenticity, or ***was accessioned***

inappropriately or on the basis of false information (for example, replicas or forgeries);

2. The object/specimen has ***doubtful potential to be exhibited or published in the foreseeable future***, or the object/specimen's accompanying data are so incomplete that the item has limited or no cultural, historical, or scientific value;

Museum staff has determined that this group of objects is unlikely to be utilized for exhibition in the near future due to its deviation from the Museum's mission. In the 25 years that the Museum has provided stewardship for these items, only the hanging lamp has been interpreted within one (1) of the Museum's exhibitions and programs. Further, although accessioned at the time of acquisition, the justification for this action is opaque, as these objects were never intended to be part of the Museum's permanent collection. Their intended eventual transfer to the CSCHP notwithstanding, it is the Museum that holds title to the Meier collection objects.

As such, the most appropriate course of action is that the Museum deaccession the billiard table, and associated items including six (6) stools (A1496-108.2), two (2) racks (A1496-108.3), 12 billiard cue and extender sticks (A1496-108.4), pocket pool adapters with wooden box (A1496-108.6), one (1) hanging lamp (A1496-108.110), and one (1) scoreboard without an accession number from its permanent collections. These furnishings do not have documentation to the late nineteenth century, thus are inappropriate for the Museum's late nineteenth-century historic site and interpretation of that period of local history.

Therefore, the Museum recommends deaccession of these objects and proposes to offer them for sale at an appropriate auction house or other public sales outlet. The funds realized from this transaction will be used according to designated purposes as described in the Museum's Collections and Exhibitions Management Policies, i.e., restricted and retained until used for an appropriate acquisition to the history collection.

FISCAL IMPACT:

The Museum anticipates offering this lot of items for public sale. Potential net revenue is unknown. In accordance with museum field best practices, the proceeds from the sale will go to a restricted special fund for future acquisitions (0000721-225252).

Prepared by:	Robyn G. Peterson, Ph.D., Museum Director
Certified as to availability of funds:	Edward Enriquez, Chief Financial Officer
Approved by:	Lea Deesing, Assistant City Manager
Approved as to form:	Gary G. Geuss, City Attorney