

Hertfordshire's Schools Art Loan Collection

**Why we need a moratorium on the sale
of our heritage by local councils**

**Bob and Roberta Smith RA OBE
Artist, NSEAD patron
@BobandRoberta**

**Armaiti Bedford
Save Herts Art
@savehertsart**



Hertfordshire Schools Art Loan Collection

(Corporate Collection: 330 artworks, £25m value, 4 sculptures being kept £22m)

Schools Art Loan Collection: 1,496 artworks, £1.2m value

Schools Collection founded 1948 by Sir John Newsom, suspended 2012

Paintings, prints, drawings, sculpture, ceramics, textiles

Works by wide range of artists, including significant artists, collected over 70 yrs



Hertfordshire County Council plans for art collection

No statutory duty to hold, display & conserve art

Keep works 'relevant to Hertfordshire'

Reduce collection by 90%

Retain 167 artworks from total of 1,826 artworks

Sell 546 high & medium value works

Offer 753 low & lower value works locally

Ring-fence £50,000 for conservation

Balance of proceeds to 'a central pot'



Current situation

Council in process of selling 450 artworks

112 artworks gifted

700+ further artworks to be gifted to local organisations, including schools

Which artworks, which organisations, how distribution will take place unclear

Integrity of Schools Collection lost as a third will be sold & the rest dispersed



Museums Association Code of Ethics

Council says it has 'fully considered' this

Preserve collections as a link between past, present & future

Disposal as last resort after other options thoroughly explored

Give priority to transferring items to accredited museums

Wherever possible do not transfer items out of public domain

Treat collections as cultural or historic assets, not financial assets

All money raised to be used solely for the benefit of the collection

Art Fund seeking assurance about this - is yet to receive a satisfactory response



Sale and dispersal of collection despite ...

Only 25 of 318 (8%) respondents to Council consultation clearly agreed with its plans, rest did not

Over 1,500 signed Petition to save collection (now over 2,500)

**St Albans Museum + Gallery & University of Herts Arts collaborated on
a joint expression of interest for entire Schools Loan Collection**

One of the last remaining such collections in local authority ownership

External funding likely for the four nationally important sculptures

Bob & Roberta Smith RA OBE helped bring greater media attention

Art Fund and Museums Association express concerns

First of 3 auctions raised more funds (£440k) than Council said it needed

2020 to be Hertfordshire's Year of Culture to

'celebrate, share and explore Hertfordshire's arts, culture and heritage'

District and town councils supporting cultural organisations & increasing cultural engagement



Moving forward

Councils legally entitled to sell and disperse artworks

But are custodians of public art collections for present & future generations

Integrity, history, social & cultural importance of Schools Loan Collection lost

Would like APPG to take action to prevent loss of other council art collections

