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Coalition secures Peter Womersley's Bernat Klein Studio for the nation

IMAGES: <https://www.flickr.com/gp/133918740@N04/4gb4T7TEGh>

A coalition of leading Scottish heritage and design organisations have been successful in buying the Bernat Klein Studio at auction today, saving the modernist masterpiece for the nation.

The Bernat Klein Foundation (BKF), the National Trust for Scotland and Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT) announced last week their hope to save the Bernat Klein Studio from ruin and create a new venue to inspire creative arts in the Scottish Borders.

At a Savills auction today, the building was secured by the coalition for £279,000.

A financial contribution from the National Trust for Scotland gave the coalition the confidence to back a competitive bid for the building. Architecture fans and supporters also generously contributed to a crowdfunding campaign which raised over £33,000 within a week, along with further philanthropic pledges from private individuals and organisations including the Path Trust and the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland Forth & Borders group. The crowdfunding campaign will continue until 8th August to raise further support towards the restoration of the building.

Professor Alison Harley, Chair of Trustees, Bernat Klein Foundation, said: "We are delighted that after many years, the future for Klein's Studio looks very bright. We would like to thank everyone who has supported our efforts so far and we look forward to sharing plans and progress over the months ahead."

Designed in 1972 by renowned modernist architect Peter Womersley and influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater, the Category A Listed studio is one of Scotland's most important twentieth-century buildings and was once the beating heart of the textile industry in the Borders. Textile designer Bernat Klein (1922 - 2014) gained international renown by designing collections here for many famous fashion houses including Chanel and Dior.

The studio is currently in a severely dilapidated state and has been on the Buildings at Risk Register since 2002. A condition survey and structural assessment instructed by Scottish Borders Council in 2023 reveals a building with significant and myriad issues from its prolonged vacancy, water-damage, deterioration, and acts of vandalism. The estimated cost of a full restoration undertaken by specialists is expected to exceed £2.5 - £3 million.

Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, whose previous projects include Riddle's Court on Edinburgh's Royal Mile, will oversee the delivery of a repair and restoration project working with the National Trust for Scotland and a range of conservation and architectural specialists. The first phase of works will comprise the urgent repairs needed to stabilise the building, including assessing the condition of the concrete cladding and making repairs to the flat roof, while designs for the full restoration to a studio will be developed over the next year. Updates on the progress of project will be shared [on the SHBT website](#).

Once complete, it is intended that The Studio will return to its original use as a design studio, as well as providing a permanent base in the Scottish Borders for the Bernat Klein Foundation, whose creatively-led projects include exhibitions, workshops, and talks.

Dr Samuel Gallacher, Director, Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, said:

"Buying the building was just the first step in this exciting project. The scale of the repair and restoration required at Peter Womersley's Bernat Klein Studio is extensive and will take many months, the skills of specialists and the support of the many people who have an interest in both Peter Womersley and Bernat Klein's work."

Philip Long OBE, Chief Executive, National Trust for Scotland said:

"The Trust along with many others for many years have been working behind the scenes to save this outstanding modern building, so important both for its architectural design and the rich heritage it represents as part of Scotland's world-renowned creativity in textiles. Now through our partnership we can be confident this significant building, the story of its architect and its resident will survive to be shared with people now and in the future and help to inspire new creativity. The National Trust for Scotland is very proud indeed to have contributed to today's wonderful news."

The coalition is grateful for the support and advice received from across the sector for this campaign: Architectural Heritage Fund, Preserving Womersley, Twentieth Century Society, William Grant Foundation, amongst others.

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Notes to editors:

The Studio

Designed in 1972 by modernist architect Peter Womersley for textile designer Bernat Klein, 'The Studio' represents a period of significant creative and cultural contribution to twentieth-century heritage in design and architecture. The Studio won a RIBA Design Award and the Edinburgh Architectural Association Centenary Medal in 1973 for its exemplary use and combination of the materials of concrete, brick, steel and glass.

The building is within walking distance of Klein's home High Sunderland. In 2005 The Bernat Klein Studio was ranked 5th on architecture magazine Prospect's list of the 100 best modern Scottish buildings, and along with High Sunderland is included on DoCoMoMo's 1993 list of 60 notable post-war buildings in Scotland. Both buildings are set within a designed landscape that was carefully planned by Klein.

The Bernat Klein Foundation

The Bernat Klein Foundation was established in 2018 to manage and develop Klein's legacy through education, research, publication and exhibition. www.bernatkleinfoundation.org.

Scottish Historic Buildings Trust

Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT) plays a unique role in preserving and promoting the nation's heritage. The Trust collaborates with local communities, local authorities, and the third sector to preserve significant historic buildings at risk in Scotland by finding new and sustainable uses. One of the largest and most active Building Preservation Trusts in the UK, since our foundation in 1978, SHBT has restored over 30 buildings and generated more than £50 million in capital and revenue. SHBT's current major projects include Leith Custom House, a new civic space for Leith centred on an innovative digital museum concept, and Edinburgh's iconic Tron Kirk. www.shbt.org.uk

The National Trust for Scotland

Established in 1931, the National Trust for Scotland is Scotland's largest conservation charity and cares for, shares and speaks up for Scotland's magnificent heritage. Over the last 90 years the Trust has pioneered public access to and shared ownership of some of the most magnificent buildings, collections and landscapes in Scotland. It cares for more than 100 sites, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them. More info at www.nts.org.uk.