

8 SEPTEMBER 2025

Bernat Klein Studio Coalition takes ownership

A coalition of leading Scottish heritage and design organisations have taken the keys to Peter Womersley's masterpiece, opening a new chapter for Scottish Modernist heritage. With significant financial support from The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the coalition now plans the first steps towards restoration.

In a landmark moment for Scottish cultural heritage, the Bernat Klein Studio Coalition, made up of partner organisations the Bernat Klein Foundation, the National Trust for Scotland, and the Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, has formally taken possession of the celebrated modernist gem, Peter Womersley's Bernat Klein Studio in the Scottish Borders. The coalition will now embark on an urgent repair project supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund.

On 30th July, the coalition secured the Category A-listed studio at auction for £284,240 including costs and legal fees, overcoming fierce competition to ensure its future as a national creative asset.

A financial contribution from the National Trust for Scotland gave the coalition the confidence to make a competitive bid for the building, as well as a fundraising campaign led by Scottish Historic Buildings Trust which raised over £150,000 from crowdfunding and private pledges in just over one week.

Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, whose previous projects include Riddle's Court on Edinburgh's Royal Mile, will now lead the delivery of a repair and restoration project working with the National Trust for Scotland and a range of conservation and architectural specialists. The immediate phase of works to secure the building is being supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Architectural Heritage Fund Scotland.

The grant of £245,000 from The National Lottery Heritage Fund will allow Scottish Historic Buildings Trust to appoint a specialist conservation design team to investigate fully the condition of the building, which is currently in a severely dilapidated state and has been on the Buildings at Risk Register since 2002. Of particular concern is the condition of the building's concrete cladding, an important element of Womersley's 1972 design which will require careful assessment to understand and conserve.

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

The Bernat Klein Foundation will input into designs for the full restoration project, which will be developed in parallel with the urgent works over the next year. Full restoration costs are provisionally estimated to be in the region of £2.5-£3million.

Professor Alison Harley, Chair of Trustees, Bernat Klein Foundation, said:

“These are exciting times for the Bernat Klein Foundation and our supporters. The coalition has worked long and hard to buy and protect the Klein Studio. Our new partnership will be focusing on the entwined legacies of Bernat Klein and Peter Womersley and this unique opportunity for the creative industries. In this next important stage of the project, the BKF will continue to support new creative output through its public programme inspired by Klein's creative and cultural legacy.”

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

“The Trust, alongside many others within the coalition, has been working behind the scenes for several years to save this outstanding building. The modernist creation is so important, both for its architectural design and the rich heritage it represents as part of Scotland's world-renowned creativity in textiles, and we are proud to support its restoration to safeguard its future. Through our partnership, we can be confident that this significant building, its stories and its place within Scotland's heritage will be protected for generations to come.”

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

“This will be a seminal project for Scottish Historic Buildings Trust, heralding new ways of working and a new approach to conserving modernist architecture. 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.

“We are incredibly grateful to our first stage funders The National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Lottery players for their support, as well the Architectural Heritage Fund Scotland, which means we are now in the fortunate position to progress this project.”

Caroline Clark, Director for Scotland, The National Lottery Heritage Fund said:

“Bernat Klein's work brought textiles from the Scottish Borders to the attention of Chanel, Dior, Balenciaga and more. The studio became a unique focal point for an industry that is inextricably woven into the heritage of this area of Scotland.

“The Bernat Klein Studio Coalition taking possession of this very special building delivers an opportunity to give it a new creative life. We are very pleased that thanks to money raised by National Lottery players the Heritage Fund will be supporting essential repairs to secure its future and the equally important work of shaping that future.”

David Robertson, Chief Executive, Scottish Borders Council, said:

“Peter Womersley’s Bernat Klein Studio is a proud part of our architectural heritage in the Scottish Borders. Given its importance, we have been encouraging a sustainable long-term solution for the building for some time, and are delighted to support this coalition of heritage and arts bodies who now offer an exciting future for The Studio which will strengthen not only our local heritage but provide new creative and economic opportunities for our region.”

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Notes to Editors:

The Studio

Designed in 1972 by renowned modernist architect Peter Womersley and influenced by Frank Lloyd Wright’s Fallingwater, the 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 building is within walking distance of Klein’s home High Sunderland, and both represent a period of significant creative and cultural contribution to twentieth century in Design and Architecture. Both concrete buildings are set within a designed landscape that was carefully planned by Klein.

Scottish Historic Buildings Trust

SHBT is a Building Preservation Trust which plays a unique role in preserving and promoting the nation’s heritage. The charity collaborates with heritage organisations, local communities and specialists to preserve, restore and rejuvenate significant historic buildings

at risk in Scotland. Since its foundation almost fifty years ago, it has restored some 30 buildings and raised in excess of £30 million.

www.shbt.org.uk

Follow @scottishhistoricbuildingstrust on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and LinkedIn

The Bernat Klein Foundation

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

Through its work focused on Klein, it has become a catalyst in creative thinking and new ideas about his archive collections, leading Scotland-wide events that inspire, inform, and connect to contemporary practice in the visual arts, design and architecture.

www.bernatkleinfoundation.org

Follow @bernatklein on Instagram, LinkedIn and Vimeo

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. It protects more than 100 places, from ancient houses to battlefields, castles, mills, gardens, coastlines, islands, mountain ranges and the plants and animals which depend upon them. In March 2022 the National Trust for Scotland launched Nature, Beauty & Heritage for Everyone, its ten-year strategy which sets out the ambitions of the charity as it moves towards its centenary in 2031.

<https://www.nts.org.uk/>

Follow @nationaltrustforscotland on Instagram, Facebook, Tik Tok and YouTube

The National Lottery Heritage Fund

Our vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future. That's why as the largest funder for the UK's heritage we are dedicated to supporting projects that connect people and communities to heritage, as set out in our strategic plan, Heritage 2033. Heritage can be anything from the past that people value and want to pass on to future generations. We believe in the power of heritage to ignite the imagination, offer joy and inspiration, and to build pride in place and connection to the past. Over the next 10 years, we aim to invest £3.6billion raised for good causes by National

Lottery players to make a decisive difference for people, places and communities.

heritagefund.org.uk

Follow @HeritageFundUK on Twitter/X, Facebook and Instagram and use #NationalLottery
#HeritageFund