

Press release: Arts Minister Michael Ellis steps in to save the Bacon

- Arts Minister Michael Ellis placed a temporary export bar on the works to save them for the nation
- One of the works is the earliest surviving Bacon painting in existence

Arts Minister Michael Ellis has placed temporary export bars on four works by Francis Bacon worth a combined total of more than £3 million in a bid to keep them in the country.

Francis Bacon (1909 – 1992) was one of the most important British artists of the 20th century. Born in Dublin, Ireland, to British parents, Bacon did not take up painting until he was in his 20s but went on to become a world renowned artist, ranking alongside Turner and Constable in importance. The four items under an export bar include a painted screen valued at £2.5 million. It was Bacon's first work in triptych, in which a picture or relief is carved on three panels, attached together and usually presented as an altarpiece.

Completed at the beginning of Bacon's career around 1930, the screen is thought to be his earliest surviving large-scale work and his earliest surviving figure painting. It showcases many of the elements and motifs that Bacon would return to throughout his career.

The other items placed under an export bar are three rugs that were sold separately at auction. The rugs are considered among the finest modernist carpets in existence and of great importance to British art and design. They are rare survivals of a very limited production of a group of rug designs by Bacon.

Valued at £186,000, £166,000 and £146,000 respectively, they were hand-knotted at the Royal Wilton Carpet Factory as part of their Wessex range in 1929. The rugs show Bacon working in a mode similar to his paintings and were displayed hanging on the wall, to be enjoyed as works of art in their own right.

Arts Minister Michael Ellis said:

Francis Bacon is one of our most respected and renowned artists, whose works had a huge influence on modern art.

It is right that we try to keep these outstanding works in this country, where they could inspire our next generation of world-class artists.

The [Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest](#) (RCEWA) made its recommendation on the grounds of the painted screen and the three rugs' outstanding aesthetic importance and their value to the study of the works of Francis Bacon, one of the greatest artists of the 20th century.

Committee Member Richard Calvocoressi said:

Given how much of his work Bacon destroyed, it is crucial that we try to retain these rare early examples in this country. Bacon's first short career as an interior designer, principally of modernist furniture and rugs, informed so much of his later painting – not least his feeling for space and structure.

The decision on the export licence applications for the three rugs and the painted screen will be deferred until 25 July 2019. This may be extended if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase the items is made at the recommended price for each item.

You can download images of the items from the [DCMS Flickr page](#).

Notes to editors

1. Organisations or individuals interested in purchasing the items should contact the RCEWA on 0845 300 6200. □
2. The Reviewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest is an independent body, serviced by The Arts Council, which advises the Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport on whether a cultural object, intended for export, is of national importance under specified criteria. □
3. The Arts Council champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives. It supports a range of activities across the arts, museums and libraries – from theatre to digital art, reading to dance, music to literature, and crafts to collections. www.artscouncil.org.uk.

Details of the painted screen are as follows: □

Case 28: £2,501,572.50 Francis Bacon 1909-1992 Painted Screen, c.1930 Oil on plywood with metal hinges, each panel 183 x 61 x 2.8cm; overall: 183 x 183 x 2.8cm

Provenance: Eric Allden, London. Roy de Maistre, London (until 1968) Francis Elek, London. Thence by descent to the present owner.

The export bar may be extended until 25 November 2019 if a serious intention

to raise funds to purchase the screen is made at the recommended price.

Details of the rugs are as follows:

Provenance for all three rugs:

Eric Allden, London Francis Elek, London (acquired from the above late 1940s)
Thence by descent to the present owner.

Case 30: £146,742.90 Hand-knotted rug in wool with linen weft, designed by Francis Bacon, produced by Royal Wilton carpets as part of their 'Wessex' range, 1929- 1930. Measurements: 212.5 h x 128 w cm. Approx. 7'h x 4' w

Case 31: £186,642.90 Hand-knotted rug in wool with linen weft, designed by Francis Bacon, produced by Royal Wilton carpets as part of their 'Wessex' range, 1929- 1930. Measurements: 212.5 h x 124.70 w cm. Approx. 7' h x 4' w

Case 32: £166,842.90 + VAT of £6,500 Hand-knotted rug in wool with linen weft, designed by Francis Bacon, produced by Royal Wilton carpets as part of their 'Wessex' range, 1929- 1930. Measurements: 206 h x 127 w cm. Approx. 7' h x 4' w

The export bar may be extended until 25 October 2019 if a serious intention to raise funds to purchase the items is made at the recommended price.