



## What will happen to Art Deco works repaired with ivory?

SIR – I am writing to you on the subject of ivory used in bronzes and as elements of decoration for furniture, silver and gold of the great Art Deco period, the last period in which ivory was used to any significant extent.

Because of ongoing, current concerns over elephant ivory poaching, the current cut-off date for exporting items of ivory has been moved back from 1974 to items that were made over 100 years ago.

This cut-off date ignores important works created in Europe during the post-First World War period through the 1920s and into the early years of the 1930s.

As a vettor of these works of art at the various London fairs, and having been a specialist in this area of Art Deco, I've been confronted with the reality of repairs to these works, often from ivory of uncertain origin.

I have found this to be continually challenging and troubling. However,

what is to become of these works if there is no official determination of how to judge them?

I make a plea that these works be included in the cut-off date and that a kind of moratorium for them be created this year. I suggest that the basis of this moratorium would be a submission to a body of experts at the owner's expense to establish provenance and history of movement, accompanied by photographs and documents, if such does not already exist.

It is important for the appreciation of this important period of modern art and design to allow freedom of movement from museum to museum, auction to auction, and collector to collector, and that could be made possible between countries that sign up for this.

Importantly, I suggest that restoration to any of these items be handled in future by careful repairs to what exists after an

accident, with images supplied to show the before and after of such repair. Of course there will be losses that can never recover value, but doing this will help to ensure a thread of historical honesty and openness; very important to the market of what would remain in this very uncertain area.

**Jacqueline Pruskin**  
Ledbury Road  
Notting Hill, London

■ SIR – We read this week's letters in the ATG with great interest (*Destroying antique ivory won't help the African elephant*, ATG No 2132).

We respect David Battie's years of experience and integrity in this matter and we also agree that it would be madness to destroy all antique art that incorporates ivory in its manufacture, thereby losing invaluable insight into past

cultures and human history.

However, it is dependent on the integrity of all in the antiques business, and we know that this is difficult to police.

Mr Battie acknowledges that he in practice adopts a 'pre-1914 barrier'. However, we cannot be certain that all auctioneers and traders would be so vigilant.

What the UK royals may be achieving by their high-profile exposure of the ivory trade is to change the mindsets of the wealthy and powerful Asians who do not seem to understand or care about the effects of their trophy hunting – something that we as mere 'functionaries' can never do!

**P & K Rennie**  
Rennies Seaside Modern  
Folkestone  
Kent

## Museum's stamp of approval at last

SIR – Despite strong resistance to my campaign last year from both the British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) and Sotheby's, in respect of the important auction of Museum material on July 1, I am happy to report that persistence pays, and that sense has finally prevailed.

The British Postal Museum & Archive (BPMA) has just announced, on its helpful website, a "Duplicate Philatelic Sales Update", further to "reviewing" its approach to future sales. In a courageous volte face, it has "amended its sales policy for duplicate materials, so that:

1. Any material sold from now on will bear a hand-stamp on the reverse;
2. Residue unsold material will no longer be laminated or destroyed; and
3. Material with significant inscriptions on the reverse will no longer be sold."

The BPMA "continues to fundraise to secure a new, national museum in which to showcase its collections and is hopeful of securing the remaining funds in the coming months".

I very much welcome the fact that Dr Adrian Steel and the museum have finally come round to listening to, and following, sound and responsible advice, rehearsed previously in the ATG, and elsewhere.

For my own part, I am happy to draw a line under the robust and dramatic events of the past, and I beg the courtesy of your columns to invite the BPMA to work productively with – and not against – me in the future, now that we appear to be on the same page.

**Gavin Littaur**  
Via email

## Portobello film tale brought back many happy memories

SIR – Thank you for your article about Howard Stean's Portobello film (*Portobello joins the silent greats of the silver screen*, ATG No 2131, March 8). The write-up made me so 'homesick', if you can call it that.

I must have been an early stallholder in those days in what was then The Red Lion. It was when Portobello Road was awash with the most wonderful, extraordinary and also valuable items from bombed-out mansions and wealthy residences. I did not know the origins and values of much of the stuff so we sold them for next to nothing, as families were trying to replace household items lost in fires or bombings.

But the stallholders themselves were a sight worth seeing – in fanciful feather boas or hats. One called Sam was a gypsy and hilarious. I sold anything. I once bought 70 dinner plates for a few shillings – Meissen etc – and came home with £70 which I could not account for – and that was money in those days!

After a few years I became known as 'The Goss Queen'. Not that I sold much Goss, but I did sell seaside china, and Goss was very collectable.

I met an old man who wanted me to buy some of his 'coins'. He had a bag of fantastic gold and silver: £5, £2, sovereigns etc. All the other stallholders wanted to see but he managed to keep them at bay and I sent him to a reputable firm – actually, I closed my stall and took him myself. Apparently he was brought up in a workhouse and apprenticed as a cabin boy on a merchant's ship aged 12. The skipper was a swine and at

Venezuela he jumped ship. There he was found by an English silver miner who took him up country to work in a mine, and was a father to the boy. There he stayed until the miner died and the coins were his wages in different currencies over the years. I never saw him again.

The Goss Queen title became mine when I was given a tin bathtub full of seaside souvenirs – a present from Southend' sort of thing. However, my free tub was in fact full of First World War mementoes made in military shapes. I had a fleet of ships, sailors' caps, bullets, hand-grenades, tanks of varying shapes, even biplanes with propellers kept on by wire – hundreds of Edith Cavells, men going over the top etc. All my doubles I put on my stall at different times, gaining a different clientele. But it didn't last!

We welcome your correspondence. Please email the Editor at: [editorial@atgmedia.com](mailto:editorial@atgmedia.com)

The Editor reserves the right to amend correspondence where necessary for publication.



Above: the ATG No 2131 article about Howard Stean's Portobello film.

However, it did get me arrested and I had a trip in a Black Maria, handcuffed to an innocent collector who only asked me to exchange two grenades for a Mills bomb in a crowded Tube train, whereupon the train was stopped and we were arrested. It was when the Irish were blowing up people and only when the police had visited my flat and seen the 'bomb' for themselves were we released, and they became collectors themselves.

The fun I had at Portobello can never be replaced and, although I had a stall full-time at Grays where I specialised in buttons, I still visited my old haunts in Portobello as Grays was closed on Saturdays.

**Kathleen Skin** (now 93)  
North Arbury  
Cambridge

### Valerie Ann Woolridge

WE regret to announce the death of Valerie Ann Woolridge, who died peacefully at home aged 72 on February 23.

Trading as Vintage Classics, she regularly exhibited at the NEC antique fairs and many other premier Midlands fairs.