



Bernat Klein
Foundation



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Coalition Forms to Save Peter Womersley's Bernat Klein Studio

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

Leading Scottish heritage and design organisations have joined forces, in a bid to restore one of Scotland's most significant modernist buildings and bring it back into public and community use.

The Bernat Klein Foundation (BKF), the National Trust for Scotland and Scottish Historic Buildings Trust (SHBT) have launched a coalition bid, supported by The National Lottery Heritage Fund, to save the Bernat Klein Studio from ruin and create a new venue to inspire creative arts in the Scottish Borders.

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. Now, it has been put up for sale by public auction at the end of the month.

It is estimated the full cost of restoration undertaken by specialists could exceed £2.5 - £3 million.

Initially, however, the priority is to secure ownership of the property and prevent further deterioration. The National Lottery Heritage Fund's support gives the coalition the confidence to back a competitive bid for the building and have a plan for much-needed emergency repairs.

A crowdfunding appeal launched by SHBT is now underway to give the coalition the best fighting chance of purchasing the building at auction: <https://www.crowdfunder.co.uk/p/saving-peter-womersleys-bernat-klein-studio>"

With support from across the heritage and cultural sector as well as local politicians, the three organisations have united as the Bernat Klein Studio Coalition aiming to buy and restore the building in a project which will see The Studio returned to its original use as a design studio alongside a programme of public engagement.

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. Once complete, it is intended the building will provide a permanent base in the Scottish Borders for the Bernat Klein Foundation, whose creatively-led projects include exhibitions, workshops, and talks.

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

"We all want the building to be sensitively conserved and restored to be part of Scotland's creative and cultural heritage for future generations. The Coalition believes that Klein's studio should be returned to its original use, highlighting the important legacy of textile and design and creating an attraction to Scotland and the Scottish Borders. This is a building that has been kept to the fore by the Peter Womersley group, who have long campaigned to see such internationally celebrated architecture brought back into public use, as is now intended by the Coalition.

"Klein transformed the Scottish textile industry and the Borders weaving industry from its post-war doldrums. His design philosophy influenced fashion, fine art, interiors and architecture. Klein also leaves a vibrant archive to inspire generations."

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

"The Bernat Klein Studio is an outstanding example in Scotland of twentieth-century design heritage, combining the entwined legacies of Klein and Womersley - two of the most innovative designers in Scotland of the latter half of the twentieth century. After many years, this appeal is an opportunity to help save this remarkable building, which represents an all too often overlooked aspect of our recent past, for the nation. The Bernat Klein Studio must be protected for future generations."

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

“We are so grateful to the Heritage Fund and National Lottery players for their support. Attempting to buy at auction is a real unknown. This is why our call for donations and support is so important to make sure we have the best possible chance to acquire this unique building. We know that there are many people who have campaigned to save this building for many years, whose hard work has helped get us to this position, and with the broad passion out there for both Bernat Klein and Peter Womersley we are grateful for each and every donation which will have a real impact to make our dream for this building a reality.

“This project will allow Scottish Historic Buildings Trust to test and advocate for ways to preserve, adapt and rejuvenate historic concrete buildings. This is no easy task and will require us to assemble a highly specialist team of experts. However, this will be an investment with a broad impact. Thinking to Scotland’s rich heritage of twentieth century architecture, much of which is at risk and is poorly adapted to our changing climate, this project can be an exemplar of how to save our modernist and brutalist buildings.”

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. We are fortunate to have so many of his buildings in our area. Given this importance, we have been encouraging a sustainable long-term solution for Womersley’s Bernat Klein Studio, located between Selkirk and Galashiels, for some time. We are delighted to support this coalition of heritage and arts bodies who offer an exciting future for this building which will strengthen not only our local heritage but provide new creative and economic opportunities for our region.”

Donations and pledges of support for the campaign to acquire and restore Bernat Klein Studio can also be made directly to Scottish Historic Buildings Trust through Millie Leadbetter-Wilcock, millie@shbt.org.uk, 0131 220 1232.

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 Sutherland. 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 concrete 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.

About The National Lottery Heritage Fund

As the largest dedicated funder of the UK's heritage, The National Lottery Heritage Fund's vision is for heritage to be valued, cared for and sustained for everyone, now and in the future as set out in our strategic plan, [Heritage 2033](#).

Over the next ten years, we aim to invest £3.6billion raised for good causes by National Lottery players to bring about benefits for people, places and the natural environment.

We help protect, transform and share the things from the past that people care about, from popular museums and historic places, our natural environment and fragile species, to the languages and cultural traditions that celebrate who we are.

We are passionate about heritage and committed to driving innovation and collaboration to make a positive difference to people's lives today, while leaving a lasting legacy for future generations to enjoy.

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