

Tate Acquires Without Spending

LONDON—Britain's Tate Gallery recently made an extraordinary public appeal, asking artists and private collectors to donate works of art in order to build up the museum's collection.

The initiative comes after two decades of skyrocketing art prices and declining amounts of government funding for acquisitions. "The Tate is reasonably good at putting its best foot forward," director Nicholas Serota told *ARTnews*. "But over a period of years if you fail to acquire work, you create gaps that can never be filled." Serota has frequently been quoted in the British press criticizing the government's art policy, particularly for cutting back a proposed investment plan to revive regional museums.

The Tate's campaign was warmly received: 24 leading artists and several private collectors donated works. Anish Kapoor contributed *Blue Void* (1990), and collector Lord Attenborough gave *Boy Smoking* (1950), by Lucian Freud. The Tate is aiming to acquire 100 donated works of art and to build an acquisitions fund in the range of £50 million–£100 million (\$95 million–



Lord Attenborough gave Lucian Freud's *Boy Smoking*, 1950, to the Tate.

government to implement tax incentives for art donations, similar to those in the United States. Currently, donors can only offset works against inheritance tax. Barrie says it would be easy to blame the politicians about art-funding complications. "But we've also failed to convince politicians that sustained, adequate funding of our great national museums and galleries is a vital and political necessity," he says.

\$190 million) over the next ten years.

In the past, the British government had granted a total yearly allotment for each museum, broken down into different categories, with £3 million (\$5.7 million) earmarked specifically for acquisition funds. In the mid-1990s, the government lumped the grant money into one sum. "The museums were quickly faced with the choice of filling a hole in the roof or buying a new painting," says David Barrie, director of the National Art Collections Fund. And while total government funding for the Tate has risen slightly overall, the amount in real terms—when inflation is factored in—has declined, Serota says. He estimates the Tate now has about 5 percent of the buying power it had 20 years ago.

This squeeze is also driving art museums and collectors to lobby the British

—Sarah Sennott

Panel to Glasgow: 'Right That Wrong'

The United Kingdom's Spoliation Advisory Panel found in November that the heirs of five Jewish owners of a Munich gallery are entitled to recover a painting that had been subjected by the Nazis to a forced sale in 1936. The work, *Le pâte de*



Le pâte de jambon, an 18th-century still life donated to the city of Glasgow in 1944, was found to be Holocaust loot.

jambon, is an 18th-century French still life by an unknown artist; it was formerly attributed to Chardin. It is part of a collection donated to the city of Glasgow in 1944.

The Munich gallery was not identified in the panel's report. Its owners were forced to liquidate their holdings because of "an extortionate tax demand, which they had to pay before they would be free to emigrate from Germany," the report states. The works were auctioned by the Berlin firm Paul Graupe in June 1936. The still life was purchased by an art dealer who

sold it to British shipping magnate Sir William Burrell a few days later. The Burrell Collection of more than 9,000 objects, including 700 paintings, is housed in its own building in Glasgow's Pollok Country Park.

Although the spoliation panel recommended restitution of the work to the heirs, who requested anonymity, it is not clear how the claim will be resolved. Burrell stipulated that Glasgow could not sell, donate, or exchange any item in the collection. The city council doesn't dispute the heirs' claim but wants to keep the painting, which now has an estimated value of £7,500 (\$14,300). The city has suggested that the national government compensate the heirs, who will accept either restitution or compensation.

But the spoliation panel, which is chaired by retired Lord Justice of Appeal Sir David Hirst, rejected the possibility of compensation. While recognizing Glasgow's interest in preserving the collection, the panel stated that "there is the powerful, and to our minds morally preponderant, consideration that those who lost possession of their property as a result of Nazi oppression should be entitled to its return." The panel suggested that Burrell's estate waive the condition barring the removal of an item from the collection.

"It is important that questions of ownership arising from the terrible events of the Nazi era are resolved," arts minister Estelle Morris said in a statement. "The British public would be unhappy to know that a museum in this country contained a work which had been identified as being wrongfully separated from its rightful owners, and nothing had been done to right that wrong."

—Marilyn Henry