

History of the Bucks County Intermediate Unit Collection

The Bucks County Traveling Art Collection is composed of artwork that has been part of a collection in the county for many years. The collection is the result of a project spearheaded in the 1940s by Bucks County Superintendent Charles H. Boehm and other local educators and artists. One Bucks County artist, Walter Emerson Baum, donated over a dozen paintings and assisted Dr. Boehm in collecting local artwork for what became known as the Traveling Art Gallery.

The educational purpose of creating the Traveling Art Gallery was to expose schoolchildren to the New Hope School of Impressionism, which was part of the Pennsylvania Impressionist Movement. The New Hope School of Impressionism has a distinctive flair, which is recognized by artists worldwide. It is a major American art movement and an integral part of Bucks County's rich art tradition.

The collection was dedicated on September 26, 1949, and included approximately 70 paintings. This collection has now grown to over 350 pieces of artwork. Since 1949, the paintings have visited all of the 13 school districts in Bucks County, including both public and private schools.

The Arts Education Trust has tried to devise ways of sharing pieces of the collection. One of the first endeavors was creating and making available limited edition prints for art patrons. Note cards of six paintings that represent the best works from the New Hope School of Impressionism were also created.

In 1997, a collaborative project of the James A. Michener Art Museum and Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22 was generated to provide an appropriate storage facility for the collection. In 1998, as part of the collaboration, a competitive grant to restore some of the paintings and to host a 50-year celebration of the collection was awarded by former senator Joseph Conti. The celebration that resulted from the award of the grant brought thousands of children to the Michener to view artwork from the collection on display. The show was a tremendous success for the Arts Education Trust.

Another endeavor is the current Art on the Move program. This pilot program began in 2001 as part of a legislative grant by Joseph Conti and a partnership between the James A. Michener Art Museum and Bucks County Intermediate Unit #22. The program brings original pieces of art to local schools; to date, more than 500 teachers and 25,000 students have participated in the program. Through Art on the Move, students are introduced to the artwork via various curriculum-related activities in art, language arts, social studies, math, technology, and science. As the project successfully grows, we hope to bring local art history into the lives of all the children in Bucks County.

