



Culture Crunch?

The Art Fund Museum Survey September 2008 - March 2009

Visitors are up - and rising...

but budgets are being cut

Independent charity The Art Fund has undertaken research to find how UK museums and galleries are faring in the recession.

312 museums took part in The Art Fund's survey - almost **20%** (1 in 5) of all accredited museums in the UK.

Respondents ranged from smaller independent museums to national institutions, including the V&A, Tate and the Natural History Museum.

The survey covers the six months from September 2008 - when the economic downturn gained momentum - to March 2009.

The Art Fund plans to repeat its survey every six months to identify trends. The next survey will take place in September 2009, following the summer holidays.

The Art Fund

We are an independent charity committed to saving art for everyone to enjoy. Since we began in 1903, we have helped to save over 860,000 works of art.

Today, some 80,000 members fund our work. In return, they receive free or reduced-price admission to many museums and galleries. This is not the only reason they join: they support us because they love art.

As more of us holiday in the UK or look for cheap days out, visits to UK museums are up

35% of respondents saw an increase in visitors, with many reporting record February half-term figures. Many museums commented they expect visitors to rise over the summer as more people holiday at home and with the expected increase in EU tourism

38% saw visitors remain the same

'The recent half term holiday gave us a 15% increase on last year...and sales of event tickets have increased. It appears as if tourists are staying at home, travelling here from Europe etc more than ever' (Jorvik Viking Centre, York)

'Museums - because they are largely free or cheap to visit - should in some ways be well-placed in the recession' (Geffrye Museum, London)

'I am surprised by the increase in visitor numbers and shop sales in the current economic climate' (Gurkha Museum, Winchester)

'We hope that as people take more advantage of local attractions, we will increase our visitors this year. We are working closely with other local tourism groups and hope that we can target people as they visit our area' (Gainsborough Old Hall, Gainsborough, Lincolnshire)

'The museum was expecting the downturn to have an impact on visitor numbers, but thanks to a successful autumn programme, we are feeling upbeat about our prospects' (a major local authority museum)

Most museums reported budget cuts - but fear the worst is yet to come

65% of respondents reported a cut in budgets

60% of museums that receive public funding are concerned that it will be reduced in the next six months. **27%** believe that it will stay the same and just **2%** think that it will increase

'Recent budget cuts have led to a cancellation of a planned conservation programme and the loss of a purchase budget for at least the coming year' (a local authority museum in Scotland)

'The council is having severe financial problems and the museum being discretionary service ... we are an ideal area to target. We have already made a 20% saving in our day to day budgets' (a local authority museum in the South)



'Budgets are at a standstill, yet visitor numbers are rising - museum and gallery admission is free - so expenditure in housekeeping, supplies and maintenance will rise ... interesting times!'

Abigail Large, Administrator,
Museum in the Park, Stroud

'The museum has seen the largest year-on-year increase in visitor numbers since free admission was introduced; at the end of the financial year the National Maritime Museum achieved its highest-ever visitor numbers.'

Angela Doane, Director, Collections, National Maritime Museum, London

Income and donations are holding steady

Income and donations (of cash and objects) seem largely unaffected - for now. Though as expected, many museums are worried about future fundraising prospects and corporate sponsorship, especially national and major regional museums

50% responded that there has been no change in corporate sponsorship; **22%** have seen a decrease; **14%** an increase

33% have seen their income from secondary sources (such as the shop and café) remain the same; **23%** have seen an increase; **19%** a decrease

51% said that individual cash donations have remained the same; **19%** have seen an increase; **15%** a decrease

74% said there has been no change in the donation of objects; **14%** have seen an increase; **7%** a decrease

'Event hire and corporate hospitality is experiencing a downturn in large-scale corporate events but bookings for private lettings remain strong' (National Maritime Museum, London)

'Our major fundraising dinner was significantly down in terms of numbers and money raised. We anticipate greater difficulty with fundraising in general' (a London museum)

There is a greater reliance on volunteers

As visitors are increasing, there is more focus on 'public facing' activities and existing resources are stretched. The volunteer workforce in museums is rising, and there is greater reliance on the work they do

24% of museums have expanded their workforce - including volunteer posts

15% have seen redundancies and **9%** have seen pay freezes

'There is a freeze on recruitment which means that there is greater dependency on temporary and casual staff. The recruitment, retention and training of skilled and knowledgeable staff is so important to museums, that any threats, delays or restrictions can only have a negative impact' (a museum in the Southwest)

'[We are] hoping to see an increase in youngish volunteers and opportunities for training partnerships' (Museum of Barnstaple and North Devon)

'Two curatorial staff vacancies (out of five) are unlikely to be filled' (a local authority museum in Scotland)



Museums are collecting for less

Museums are still buying and are taking advantage of falling art market prices

60% of museums attempted to purchase an object (or objects) and of those **84%** were successful

So overall, **50%** of museums purchased an object in the last six months

58% of museums got a discount on the object; **48%** of those achieved a reduction of **more than 10%**

Of the museums that didn't purchase, the main reasons given were: that they don't purchase new material (they only acquire by gift or bequest); insufficient funds; priorities elsewhere; no time to research what they would like to purchase

51% of respondents applied for external funding to help purchase new material

Only **24%** of respondents intend to purchase an object in the next six months

'There is no such thing as a fixed price for an art work' (Guernsey Museum & Art Gallery)

'In this climate, acquisitions are far from a priority' (a local authority museum in the Northwest)

'The most tangible result is a recent decision not to go forward with a major fundraising campaign to acquire a work of art in the present climate' (a major local authority museum)

Sam Taylor-Wood, *Escape Artist (Multicoloured)*, 2008
Nottingham Museums and Galleries
ArtFunded 2009
© the artist
Courtesy White Cube
The gallery negotiated a 37% discount on this purchase