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## The Hunt Family

John Hunt was born in London in 1900. He studied both medicine and architecture before starting a career as an antique dealer. He opened a shop in Bury Street, London and became established as an authority on medieval art. Gertrude Hartman was born in Mannheim in 1903, she met John Hunt in London in the early 1930s. They were brought together through their mutual interest in art and antiques and were married in 1933. The 1930s were a good time for antique collectors as European museums were preoccupied with restoring their buildings after the Great War and American Museums had not yet entered the market. At the end of the 1930s their work moved away from that of shop-based dealers to a role as advisors to major collections.



John & Gertrude Hunt with their children, John and Trudy, 1964

The Hunts assisted in the formation of such international collections as that of Sir William Burrell in Glasgow, the collection of William Randolph Hearst and that of the Aga Khan. They also worked as advisors for Sotheby's, London. It was in this period, the 1930s and 40s that the Hunts set about the formation of their own collection. About 1939 the couple moved to Lough Gur in Co. Limerick, where Professor Sean O'Riordain, University College Cork, had begun an excavation programme on the archaeological sites there. During the 40s and 50s John Hunt indulged his abiding interest in archaeology, working on numerous excavations there. At Lough Gur he made the first reconstruction of a Neolithic house. This prototype helped in the later reconstruction of such a house at the Hunts' own experimental centre at Craggaunowen, Co. Clare, which opened to the public in 1975. John Hunt encouraged Lord Gort to restore Bunratty Castle during the 1950s. In advising him on the refurbishment of the castle, John Hunt shared his great knowledge of the medieval period to ensure the historical accuracy of the project.

In 1956 the Hunts moved to Drumleck in Howth, Co Dublin. This move allowed them room to display their ever growing collection which occupied every available space in the house. Objects were not displayed chronologically or according to type as the Hunts believed that they could see objects with a keener eye if they were removed from their context.



Interior of the Hunt's home, Lough Gur Co. Limerick, 1945

In the 1970's John and Gertrude aware of the scale of their collection and wishing to keep it together began to look for a permanent location for it to be housed. Initially it was thought that it could be housed in Craggaunowen but this proved too expensive. Then Dr Edward Walsh, President of the National Institute of Higher Education (now the University of Limerick) offered to house a substantial part of the collection. The Hunt Museum at Plassey was officially opened in 1978. The collection remained in the University until 1997 when it moved to its present location in the restored 18th-century Custom House in Limerick city. John Hunt died in 1976, his wife Gertrude in March 1995, without either of them living to see the realisation of their dream. Their two children, John Jr. and Trudy have continued in their parents' philanthropic attitude, donating the remainder of the collection to the museum. The Hunt Museum stands as a fitting tribute to John and Gertrude Hunt who assembled this unique collection to be enjoyed for posterity by every one

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## History

The Hunt Museum was established to house an internationally important collection of approximately 2000 works of art and antiquities formed by John and Gertrude Hunt during their lifetimes. As antique dealers and advisors to collectors they built a thriving business and also began to acquire pieces that reflected their own interests and curiosity rather than for commercial purposes. During the latter stages of John's life, they became increasingly aware of the scale of their collection and wished that it would remain intact. They began to search for a permanent home for their collection. Fortunately they met Professor Patrick Doran of the National Institute of Higher Education (now University of Limerick) and Dr Edward Walsh, the Institute's President, who agreed to house a substantial part of the Collection on a temporary basis, the Hunt Museum opened there in 1978 in an exhibition room with the display designed by architect Arthur Gibney.

During this period the Irish Government had declined the offer of the Collection, so the requirement to find a suitable home and owner to take responsibility for the artifacts became more urgent. A trust- The Hunt Museums Trust was established in 1974 to hold the Collection and the property at Craggaunowen (a 16th Century four story tower house, a typical of late medieval Ireland, purchased and restored by John and Gertrude) in trust on behalf of the people of Ireland. The trust established The Hunt Museum Ltd. whose sole purpose was the establishment of a permanent home for the museum. Under the Chairmanship of Dr Tony Ryan this company provided the necessary energy to create the museum as we see it today. A public private partnership involving the University of Limerick, Shannon Development, Limerick Corporation and the Department of Arts Heritage, the Gaeltacht and the Islands linked with local business interests secured the historic 18th-century former Custom House and the funds to restore and renovate the building to international museum standards. The museum was officially opened by the Taoiseach John Bruton on 14 February 1997. It was a moment of great celebration for all concerned but unfortunately neither John nor Gertrude had lived to realise their dream, but the museum stands as a monument to their enthusiasm, curiosity and generosity.

## Children

### Families

The Hunt Museum Treasure Trail is available to all children visiting the Museum. This is an ideal way for families to explore the Collection together.

### Primary Programme

The Primary Programme consists of programmes, workshops and activities suitable for children of all ages and abilities:

- Hunt Museum Treasure Trail
- Seasonal Treasure Trails
- Costume workshop
- Portrait workshop
- Time Travel
- Help build a Time Machine Workshop
- 'Drawing in the Galleries'
- Life in the Medieval World
- Prehistoric Ireland Workshop
- Multi-cultural workshop

For further information and to be placed on our mailing list please phone Ruth Mulhern at 061 490080 email [education@huntmuseum.com](mailto:education@huntmuseum.com)  
All activities must be booked in advance.



### Extra-curricular Activities

Art workshops available at different times throughout the year. For further information and to be placed on our mailing list please phone Ruth Mulhern on 061 490080 or email [education@huntmuseum.com](mailto:education@huntmuseum.com)

## Young People & Students

### Secondary Programme

The Secondary programme consists of workshops and activities suitable for young people of all abilities.

*Guided tour*  
*Specialised talks*  
*Art workshop*  
*Seasonal Activities*

*Handling Session*  
*Costume workshop*  
*Portrait workshop*

### Students of English as a Foreign Language

*Simplified tours*  
*Quiz designed for students of English as a foreign language*  
Language exercises based on visit to the Hunt Museum available for classroom use.

*Costume Workshop*



### Third Level Students:

*Guided tour*  
*Lectures*

*Specialised talks*  
*Handling Sessions*

For a complete list of lunchtime and evening lectures see the events guide.

### Extra-curricular activities

Art workshops available at different times throughout the year.  
For further information and to be placed on our mailing list please phone Ruth Mulhern on 061 490080 or email [education@huntmuseum.com](mailto:education@huntmuseum.com)

## Adult Education

### Tourists & Visitors

- Guided tour
  - Specialised tour
  - Handling sessions
- (Available to groups on request)

### Lectures

For a complete list of lunchtime and evening lectures see the events guide.

### Docent Programme

*Become a Volunteer at the Hunt Museum!*

The Hunt Museum Docents (from the Latin 'to learn') are Museum volunteers who give four hours of their time to the museum a week. Docents give guided tours to museum visitors, are involved in museum education programmes and are encouraged to research objects in the collection. Docent training consists of a lecture series from October to May which gives background information on the artefacts in the museum, training workshops and outings. Guidance is also provided by more experienced docent co-ordinators. If you would like more information please contact Ruth Mulhern at 061 490080



### Liberal Arts Lecture Programme

Sign up for an art history course! Ten week lecture series on Landscape into Art beginning with an introduction to nature in art. Further lectures will look at topography, English and German Romantic painting, French plein-airism, Impressionist landscape, 18th and 19th century Irish landscapes, Post-Impressionist land art and New Landscapes to the present day. This course will be delivered by guest speakers. Runs on Wednesday evenings from 7-9 pm from 29 September to 8 December in the The Hunt Museum.

For further information contact the Education Department on 061 490080 or email [education@huntmuseum.com](mailto:education@huntmuseum.com)

## Teachers

### Inservice training course

The Museum runs an annual inservice training course, which is recognized by the Department of Education.

### Newsletter

To be placed on a mailing list for the Museum's newsletter for educationalists, please email [education@huntmuseum.com](mailto:education@huntmuseum.com)

### Resource Pack

To receive a resource pack on 20th century Irish art please contact Ruth Mulhern on 061 490080 or email [education@huntmuseum.com](mailto:education@huntmuseum.com)

