

Dalí's 'erotic lampshades' are saved for the nation

By Sherna Noah

Salvador Dalí's "erotic" lamps have been saved for the nation after the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) acquired what it described as "one of the most important examples of modern lighting ever designed in the UK".

Experts have previously described the lamps as "witty" and "erotic" and "everything one would expect of Dalí", with the champagne cups that form the objects resembling "female breasts". A temporary export bar was placed on the lamps last year. They were at risk of being exported unless a buyer came forward to match the £425,000 asking price.

The Surrealist artist Dalí and British collector and poet Edward James jointly designed the lamps, made from oversized brass champagne coupes, stacked on top of the other.

They will be reunited with Dalí's "Mae West Lips" sofa when they arrive at the V&A in London. Both were designed by Dalí and James for Monkton House, a Surrealist home at West Dean in West Sussex.

The export bar was put in place on the recommendation of the Re-



The champagne lamps were designed for a Surrealist house by Salvador Dalí and Edward James ROBERT AUTON

viewing Committee on the Export of Works of Art and Objects of Cultural Interest, which advises the Government on the export of artworks.

At the time, committee member Richard Calvocoressi said: "The lamps are everything one would expect of Dalí. Witty, erotic – the champagne cups can be read as female breasts – the lamps are also strikingly sculptural, standing about the height of a person, with the line of vertical cups resembling a spinal column, a brilliant example of fantasy lighting."

Christopher Wilk, the V&A's keeper of furniture, textiles and fashion, said: "These lamps are of outstanding significance to the history of modern design and Surrealist art in Britain and we are delighted that the V&A is acquiring them for public enjoyment."

Sir Peter Luff, the chairman of the National Heritage Memorial Fund which supported the purchase along with Art Fund and V&A members, said: "The fund helps secure for the nation our most important and precious heritage at risk of being lost.

"These exquisite lamps, on the cusp of being sold to an overseas buyer, fit the bill exactly."