

Items made from ivory

If you're thinking of offering elephant or mammoth ivory to the Royal Albert Memorial Museum:

Please DO:

- [contact a curator](#) if you would like to offer ivory, or an item containing ivory, to the museum.
- read the guidance below.

Please do NOT:

- send RAMM ivory, or items containing ivory, in the post.
- drop off items at the museum reception.
- come to RAMM with an item unless you have an appointment with a curator.

RAMM will not accept any unexpected items. RAMM is not a depository for unwanted ivory.

RAMM's collecting policy on ivory

Ivory is present across RAMM's collection. To the best of our knowledge its acquisition was in line with the legislation at that time. In light of the [Ivory Act 2018](#) RAMM will only accept ivory in exceptional circumstances. All potential acquisitions are considered on a case by case basis.

RAMM may accept the following:

- ▶ Fine art items such as portrait miniatures painted on a thin layer of ivory
- ▶ Decorative art items such as musical instruments inlaid with ivory
- ▶ Uncarved ivory tusks or teeth. They must predate 1900 and have a known collector, date and location (town or district).
- ▶ Carved or worked items of cultural significance that predate 1900. Items must have known provenance.

It will remain legal to donate ivory to museums. RAMM will only consider purchasing items of exceptional cultural significance. They must meet the exemption criteria of the Ivory Act 2018 and will need a sale licence.

Current legislation in brief

In December 2018 one of the world's toughest bans on the sale of ivory became law in the UK. This is the [Ivory Act 2018](#). It is now illegal to buy, hire or sell elephant or mammoth ivory. The ban covers ivory items of all ages. The penalty for breaching the ban will be an unlimited fine or up to five years in jail.

There are exemptions for some items. These include:

- ▶ Portrait miniatures older than 1918 with a surface area of no more than 320 cm²
- ▶ Items older than 1947 where the total ivory content is less than 10% of the total volume
- ▶ Musical instruments older than 1975 where the ivory content of the material from which it is made is less than 20%
- ▶ Sales of worked ivory between or to qualifying museums

Please read the Act for full details. At present, the proposed ban only covers elephant ivory. It is likely that the sale of ivory from other animals such as hippos and narwhals will also become illegal.

The need for new legislation

In 2018 Michael Gove (Environment secretary) introduced the ban. It is in response to the consultation by DEFRA. Illegal ivory trade is estimated to be worth up to £17 billion a year. It is one of the toughest bans in the world and ensures that modern ivory will no longer carry a high commercial value. The ban seeks to protect elephants for future generations.

The number of wild elephants has declined in the last decade. Each year around 20,000 (around 55 a day) elephants are slaughtered to meet the demands of the global market. Exemptions to the ban (such as those mentioned above) are carefully targeted to items that do not contribute to poaching.

Further information

- ▶ RAMM's Collections Development Policy
- ▶ UK Government: [Ivory Act 2018](#)
- ▶ Museums Association's [response](#) to the DEFRA Consultation

