# U2's The Edge surprises Belfast artist by bidding on Titanic painting at charity auction



A Belfast artist recently experienced an extraordinary moment when U2's lead guitarist The Edge unexpectedly bid on his artwork during a charity auction held at the Titanic Museum. Stephen Whalley, who was commissioned to perform live painting at the event on May 24, captured a striking image of the museum against a luminous evening sky. The auction was part of a larger fundraising initiative by local tech entrepreneurs Mark Dowds and Roger Johnston, aiming to raise £1 million for the Cancer Fund for Children.

Whalley, reflecting on the evening, expressed his astonishment upon realising that The Edge was amongst the bidders. As he completed the painting, he delivered a brief speech about both his artistic process and the significance of his work. The moment he noticed The Edge at a nearby table raising his paddle to bid, he felt an overwhelming sense of support. “Once he started, I don’t think anybody else wanted to bid because they knew how big and how important it was that he got it,” Whalley recounted.

The completed oil painting not only earned a four-figure sum at auction but also resonated deeply with Whalley's personal narrative. He deliberately chose to depict the Titanic Museum with the iconic Harland & Wolff cranes in the background—a tribute to his father, who worked there for 45 years. Whalley highlighted the ongoing development in the area, noting that the view he immortalised might soon change, making his piece even more poignant. He noted, “Everybody’s been chatting about the buildings going up in front of it… so I decided I’d create a really nice image where you’d get to see the Titanic building itself.”

Encouragement from The Edge during the performance, including a thumbs-up and a wink, likely influenced the musician's decision to bid, indicating an appreciation for Whalley's artistry. This reflects The Edge's history of supporting charitable initiatives through art; he has previously contributed to multiple charity auctions, including the Incognito art sale which featured works from over 1,200 artists to benefit children with serious health conditions. This dedication to philanthropy is well-acknowledged in the music community, showcasing a significant overlap between artistic expression and charitable efforts.

Whalley expressed his delight at the final sale price, particularly knowing that the funds would support a cause close to his heart. His longstanding affiliation with the Cancer Fund for Children added an extra layer of meaning to his participation in the auction, highlighting the intersection of personal and community concerns. As he remarked, “We’ve always donated to the charity… so I wanted to make sure the painting was really excellent just because it meant that wee bit more to us.”

Thus, in a moment that intertwined the worlds of art and philanthropy, Whalley's experience exemplifies how creativity can transcend mere expression, resonating deeply within the community and fostering significant social impact.

## Reference Map:

* Paragraph 1 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/u2-star-buys-belfast-artists-titanic-painting-in-surprise-charity-auction-moment-VUYE3YLDFVBJFBLR6GIO73AS5M/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/u2-star-buys-belfast-artists-titanic-painting-in-surprise-charity-auction-moment-VUYE3YLDFVBJFBLR6GIO73AS5M/)
* Paragraph 2 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/u2-star-buys-belfast-artists-titanic-painting-in-surprise-charity-auction-moment-VUYE3YLDFVBJFBLR6GIO73AS5M/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/u2-star-buys-belfast-artists-titanic-painting-in-surprise-charity-auction-moment-VUYE3YLDFVBJFBLR6GIO73AS5M/)
* Paragraph 3 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/u2-star-buys-belfast-artists-titanic-painting-in-surprise-charity-auction-moment-VUYE3YLDFVBJFBLR6GIO73AS5M/), [[3]](https://www.hotpress.com/culture/u2s-the-edge-bob-geldof-tommy-tiernan-create-art-in-aid-of-jack-jill-childrens-foundation-22847395), [[4]](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/u2-s-edge-and-bob-geldof-among-stars-creating-art-for-children-s-charity-sale-1.4525475), [[5]](https://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/6580901.stm)
* Paragraph 4 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/u2-star-buys-belfast-artists-titanic-painting-in-surprise-charity-auction-moment-VUYE3YLDFVBJFBLR6GIO73AS5M/), [[6]](https://www.nme.com/news/music/u2-378-1351832)
* Paragraph 5 – [[1]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/u2-star-buys-belfast-artists-titanic-painting-in-surprise-charity-auction-moment-VUYE3YLDFVBJFBLR6GIO73AS5M/), [[2]](https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/u2-star-buys-belfast-artists-titanic-painting-in-surprise-charity-auction-moment-VUYE3YLDFVBJFBLR6GIO73AS5M/)

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## Bibliography

1. <https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/u2-star-buys-belfast-artists-titanic-painting-in-surprise-charity-auction-moment-VUYE3YLDFVBJFBLR6GIO73AS5M/> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
2. <https://www.irishnews.com/entertainment/u2-star-buys-belfast-artists-titanic-painting-in-surprise-charity-auction-moment-VUYE3YLDFVBJFBLR6GIO73AS5M/> - U2's guitarist The Edge surprised artist Stephen Whalley by bidding on his live painting of the Titanic Museum during a charity auction at the Titanic Museum on May 24. The event aimed to raise £1 million for the Cancer Fund for Children. Whalley, who painted the museum against a luminous evening sky, was unaware of The Edge's intention to bid. The painting sold for a four-figure sum, with proceeds supporting the charity.
3. <https://www.hotpress.com/culture/u2s-the-edge-bob-geldof-tommy-tiernan-create-art-in-aid-of-jack-jill-childrens-foundation-22847395> - In 2021, U2's The Edge, Bob Geldof, Tommy Tiernan, and Paul Costelloe contributed artworks to the Incognito art sale, supporting the Jack & Jill Children's Foundation. The sale featured over 3,000 pieces from more than 1,200 artists, with each €60 postcard-sized artwork providing four hours of specialist in-home nursing care to a sick child. The initiative aimed to raise over €4 million annually to support families caring for sick children at home. ([hotpress.com](https://www.hotpress.com/culture/u2s-the-edge-bob-geldof-tommy-tiernan-create-artwork-in-aid-of-jack-jill-childrens-foundation-22847395?utm_source=openai))
4. <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/u2-s-edge-and-bob-geldof-among-stars-creating-art-for-children-s-charity-sale-1.4525475> - U2's The Edge, Bob Geldof, Tommy Tiernan, and Paul Costelloe were among over 1,200 artists contributing to the Incognito online art sale in aid of the Jack & Jill Children's Foundation. The sale featured 3,000 postcard-sized artworks, each priced at €60, with proceeds funding specialist in-home nursing care for sick children. The initiative aimed to raise over €4 million annually to support families caring for sick children at home. ([irishtimes.com](https://www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/u2-s-edge-and-bob-geldof-among-stars-creating-art-for-children-s-charity-sale-1.4525475?utm_source=openai))
5. <https://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/6580901.stm> - In April 2007, U2's The Edge auctioned his favourite Gibson Les Paul guitar, used on every U2 tour since 1985, raising $240,000 (£120,000) for Music Rising, a charity co-founded by The Edge to replace instruments lost in Hurricane Katrina. Other items included guitars owned by Jimi Hendrix and Paul McCartney, as well as Bono's sunglasses. The auction raised approximately $2.4 million (£1.2 million) for the charity. ([news.bbc.co.uk](https://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/entertainment/6580901.stm?utm_source=openai))
6. <https://www.nme.com/news/music/u2-378-1351832> - In April 2007, U2's The Edge auctioned his Gibson Les Paul guitar, used on every U2 tour since 1985, raising $240,000 (£120,000) for Music Rising, a charity co-founded by The Edge to replace instruments lost in Hurricane Katrina. Other items included guitars owned by Jimi Hendrix and Paul McCartney, as well as Bono's sunglasses. The auction raised approximately $2.4 million (£1.2 million) for the charity. ([nme.com](https://www.nme.com/news/music/u2-378-1351832?utm_source=openai))
7. <https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/u2-studio-painting-sells-for-5m/28395407.html> - In 2008, U2 sold a painting by Jean-Michel Basquiat, which had hung in their Dublin recording studio since 1989, at Sotheby's for over £5 million. The painting, 'Pecho/Oreja', was purchased by U2 after bassist Adam Clayton saw it in a New York gallery. The sale was part of an auction that raised £95 million, a record for a summer sale of contemporary art in Europe. ([belfasttelegraph.co.uk](https://www.belfasttelegraph.co.uk/news/u2-studio-painting-sells-for-5m/28395407.html?utm_source=openai))