



"The Afghans," by Russian artist Alexandre Iacovleff, hung for decades inside a North Attleborough school auditorium. (north attleborough photo via ASSOCIATED PRESS)

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### **School Faces Dilemma on Valuable Art**

*All Things Considered*, February 7, 2007 · In an elementary school in North Attleboro, Mass., a large painting of an Afghan tribesman has hung for decades in the school's auditorium. It turns out that picture is worth millions of dollars.

So now, the school system must decide whether it will display the painting in accordance with the wishes of its donor — or sell it.

Michelle Norris talks with Rick Smith, the North Attleboro Superintendent of Schools, who says the school system sent information about the painting to Sotheby's auction house for an estimate. Smith expected to hear that the old painting was worth around \$1,000.

But it turned out that the 7-by-10-foot painting was a masterpiece painted by Russian Alexandre Iacovleff, called "Afghans." Iacovleff lived from 1887 to 1938.

"They would expect it to sell for between 1 and 2 million dollars," Smith says. "It's not our mission to collect and store art. You'd have to insure it, and no insurance company is gonna do that if it's in a building in which it would never be secure."

Besides, Smith says, the painting is a piece of Russia's heritage. And it belongs in a museum, he adds, not a dark school hall.

### **For more information see:**

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