

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL**Report by Chief Officer – Citizen, Culture & Facilities****Cultural Committee: 17 January 2022**

Subject: Update – WDC Scottish Art Acquisition Fund**1. Purpose**

- 1.1** This report provides Committee with an update on acquisitions previously approved for purchased via the West Dunbartonshire Council Scottish Art Acquisition Fund (established May 2021); future plans for this fund; and recommends a series of acquisitions for approval by Committee.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1** The Committee is asked to:
- note the contents of this report
 - approve the acquisition of works as proposed, to enhance and augment the Council's fine art collection
 - agree that a report outlining recommendations for the balance of this fund be brought to a future committee as appropriate

3. Background

- 3.1** In March 2018 the Council agreed to create a £4m Cultural Capital Fund to invest in West Dunbartonshire's cultural and heritage infrastructure in order to unlock regeneration, increase tourism and raise the reputation of the area. The 2018/19 Budget Document pointed to the transformation of the waterfront at Clydebank and the perfect opportunity this created to undertake bold and exciting projects that revitalise Council assets and change the way people look at our area.
- 3.2** Enabled by the Cultural Capital Fund, work is already underway to enact improvements to Clydebank Town Hall, including an expansion of the existing gallery exhibition space. Funds have also been allocated to realise a new museum for Clydebank in the basement of Clydebank Library, bringing new prominence to Clydebank's rich history and heritage.
- 3.3** In May 2021 further funds were allocated to establish a Scottish Art Acquisition Fund, intended to enable the purchase of artworks by Scottish artists – and in particular Scottish women artists – to augment and enhance West Dunbartonshire Council's existing fine art collection.
- 3.4** The Council's fine art collection includes a notable collection of works by the Scottish Colourists, alongside which sits a small selection of works by Scottish women artists contemporary with, influenced by, or who followed the

Colourists. Cumulatively and through judicious acquisition, an important and representative collection of Scottish art has been formed. Through development of this collection by acquisition, a transformational resource that can be used to educate and inspire residents young and old will continue to grow, significantly improving West Dunbartonshire's citizens' access to high quality culture on their doorstep.

3.5 In November 2021 a series of recommended acquisitions were brought before Committee. All works listed were identified via a process of research, including review of the existing fine art collection and consideration of the Council's existing Acquisitions, Disposal and Collections Development Policy. Of these works, 14 were approved for acquisition, as listed below:

- *The Castle, Gotha* by F C B Cadell, 1906, watercolour
- *Tenements in the Snow* by Joan Eardley, 1953, oil on board
- *Little Interior* by Elizabeth Blackadder, 1972, watercolour
- *Japanese Garden, Kyoto*, by Elizabeth Blackadder, 1992, etching
- *Part of a Stream*, by Mardi Barrie, c.1965, oil on board
- *Spotted Dog (Henry Dooley)* by Pat Douthwaite, c.1983, pastel
- *Goddess*, by Pat Douthwaite, 1974, oil pastel & charcoal on buff paper
- *Orchid, Paphiopedelum Lawrenceanum* by Elizabeth Blackadder, 1998, watercolour
- *November III (St Andrews)* by Wilhelmina Barns-Grahame, 1991, screenprint
- *Kyleakin* by Anne Redpath, lithograph on paper
- *The Little Posy* by Anne Redpath, colour lithograph, 1957
- *Flowers in a Teapot* by Anne Redpath, watercolour
- *Tobermory* by Penelope Beaton, watercolour on paper
- *Winter Walk* by Frances Walker, screenprint, 1990

3.6 At a subsequent meeting of the Cultural Committee on December 20 2021, two further works were approved for acquisition. These were:

- *Nude Study* by SJ Peplow, 1930, conte drawing
- *Reading* by SJ Peplow, 1913, conte drawing

3.7 Following both the November and December Committee approvals, all relevant galleries were contacted to secure acquisition of works approved for acquisition. Only one work was no longer available at point of contact. This was: *Flowers in a Teapot* by Anne Redpath. Final confirmation is also pending on the availability of *The Little Posy* by Anne Redpath, although the gallery in question has been closed for an extended period between December 2021 and January 2022.

3.8 In order to maximise the potential of the WDC Scottish Art Acquisition Fund, officers recommended pursuing additional external funding to support the acquisition of *Tenements in the Snow* by Joan Eardley. 2021 was celebrated as Eardley's centenary year, and the Council's fine art collection already includes two works by this important artist. It was felt that a strong case could be made to achieve additional support for this purchase, to which end an application is in progress to the National Fund for Acquisitions. The selling

gallery has supported this application by agreeing the requisite museum discount on the purchase price.

- 3.9** Taking cognisance of Committee feedback, and building on research already undertaken, officers have continued to consider further fine art acquisitions that would answer the aspirations of the fund, and augment the existing WDC fine art collection. This includes consideration of Scottish women artists broadly contemporaneous to those listed at 3.5 above, such as Alison Watt, Christine McArthur, Jacki Parry, Kate Cameron and Mary Armour. In addition, works by earlier 20th century artists including Margaret Macdonald Mackintosh and Francis Macdonald will continue to be pursued should they become available, whilst opportunities to acquire work by 21st century Scottish women artists is also being explored.

4. Main Issues

- 4.1** Officers have continued to research acquisition opportunities and correspond with various selling galleries during December 2021 and into January 2022. A particular focus of this activity has been on identifying works by Alison Watt currently available on the open market. It has not been possible to bring any firm recommendation to Committee on purchasing any works by Watt at this time. This is in part due to the short timeline available for research, compounded by festive closures; price on application listings; and the need to balance the financial viability of any possible acquisition against the collecting priorities outlined in the WDC Acquisitions, Disposal and Collections Development policy. Should a suitable work by Watt be identified by officers, they will seek to bring this before Committee as a matter of urgency.
- 4.2** Officers are able to recommend the purchase of three additional works, as listed in appendix 1, which answer Committee's aspiration to broaden focus to acquire works by 21st century Scottish women artists. The curatorial context for these recommendations is set out below. None of the artists listed are currently represented in the WDC fine art collection, but acquisition of these works would undoubtedly complement and enhance the established collection.

Susie Leiper

- 4.3** Born in Glasgow, Leiper now lives and works in Edinburgh as both a painter and calligrapher. She is particularly well known for her beautifully created handmade artist books, but is equally at home painting or writing on varied surfaces, from walls to canvases to small pieces of wood. The acquisition of this work presents the opportunity to explore narratives around urban townscapes; regeneration; and place. It also provides future opportunities to explore Leiper's work through links to bound volumes in the fine art collection.

Cate Inglis

- 4.4** Cate Inglis' first solo show in 2016 explored the transience of urban structures and the relentless process of growth and change. Her interest in the transient

nature of the built environment has led her to explore the industrial and post-industrial landscapes of the urban environment, inviting questions that focus on ideas of place and the inherent, intangible heritage therein. This work unlocks opportunities within the WDC fine art collection to explore narratives of regeneration that would link equally well to the work by Susie Leiper recommended for acquisition, as well as works by – for example – Joan Eardley already held in the collection.

Elaine Cunningham

- 4.5** Inspired by her coastal upbringing, Elaine Cunningham’s atmospheric approach to sea and landscapes has helped establish her reputation. She has described her approach to seascapes as an emotional response to the sea, striving to capture movement and mood whilst retaining a sense of scale and power. In this, her artistic approach and motivation echoes that of Joan Eardley, who was similarly bewitched by the North Sea. Cunningham is now based in Angus, where she seeks to explore her relationship to the sea in all its moods – from meditative to tempestuous.
- 4.6** Officers are confident that the acquisitions recommended in this report continue the expansion and elevation of WDC’s fine art collection in a way that is at once ambitious and considered. The works selected provide depth and reach that makes for a representative collection, with the potential to continue to grow in the future.
- 4.7** As noted above, opportunities to grow the West Dunbartonshire Council fine art collection will continue to be pursued by officers, with a particular focus on artists noted at 3.9 above. Should any additional funds be allocated or secured to support fine art acquisition in the future, these would be used to pursue the inclusion of other major Scottish artists in the collection, increasing its overall relevance, representation, and significance accordingly.

5. People Implications

- 5.1** There are no direct people implications arising from this report

6. Financial and Procurement Implications

- 6.1** Acquisitions will be taken forward on a work by work basis, via the relevant selling gallery. To ensue best value, where appropriate and/or possible, a museum discount will be sought on the advertised purchase price of artworks.
- 6.2** Committee approved the establishment of a Scottish Art Acquisition Fund in May 2021, allocating £100,000 from the Cultural Capital Fund for this purpose. The total committed expenditure to date is £65,515, leaving a balance of £34,485.
- 6.3** The total cost to acquire by purchase those works listed in appendix 1 is £7,800. Thereafter, an unallocated balance of £26,685 remains.

- 6.4 Should the funding application in support of Joan Eardley's *Tenements in the Snow* be successful, this balance will increase by up to £13,275, giving a potential maximum total of £39,960.
- 6.5 Art works purchased will be added to the Council's existing fine art insurance policy. Given the anticipated value of individual works proposed for acquisition it is unlikely that this will see a notable uplift in the cost of this policy.
- 6.6 Advice and guidance will be sought from the Corporate Procurement Unit, as required, to ensure due process is followed at all stages of purchasing.

7. Risk Analysis

- 7.1 There is a risk that the investment in fine art could lead to a poor use of public funds with either inflated prices paid for works, or works depreciating in value. This has been mitigated by in-depth market research, negotiation on price, and application of a museum discount, where applicable. Works to be purchased will form part of the Council's permanent museum collection; they have been selected in a curatorial context with primary consideration given to artistic merit and inherent cultural value; works will be accessioned in accordance with the Council's approved Acquisitions, Disposal and Collections Development policy. Although valuations will be retained for the purpose of insurance, as an accredited museum service there is no expectation that works will be resold in the future unless an ethical and meaningful case for disposal can be made.
- 7.2 There is a risk that this investment in fine art could be negatively perceived by some members of the community at a time when Council budgets are under pressure. This is mitigated by the fact that the investment is being made from a designated Fund created for the direct purpose of cultural investment. It will also be mitigated by community-focused programming across West Dunbartonshire's cultural venues, and by providing access to works purchased in the context of learning, engagement, and creative activity. Officers will ensure that the purchased artwork is displayed as soon as possible, for public benefit and enjoyment.
- 7.3 There is a risk that the Council will fail to purchase artwork of suitable quality and relevance in time to fill the newly developed gallery space at the Clydebank Town Hall. This has been mitigated by the application of specialist knowledge by officers in the Arts and Heritage service; proactive research of available artworks; and adherence to the collecting principles outlined in existing policies.
- 7.4 There is a risk that should this proposal not go ahead the Council will lose the opportunity to enhance the fine art collection and fail to capitalise on the investment in the new gallery space at the Town Hall.

8. Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA)

- 8.1 An EIA screening has been completed and no impacts were identified.

9. Consultation

9.1 This proposal to acquire by purchase artworks by Scottish women artists has been developed by the Team Lead Arts & Heritage, with specialist input from officers across Arts & Heritage, Performance and Strategy, Corporate Communications, and the Corporate Procurement Unit. Consultation has also taken place with Legal and Finance.

10. Strategic Assessment

10.1 The proposals within this report support delivery of efficient and effective frontline services that improve the everyday lives of residents.

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Appendices:	Appendix 1: Scottish Women Artists Acquisition Fund – recommended acquisitions January 2022
Background Papers:	Acquisition Fund for Scottish Art, Cultural Committee 17 May 2021 Acquisitions Proposal - Scottish Art, Cultural Committee 29 November 2021
Wards Affected:	All