

Purchase of work by Edith Simon

Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

2 December 2003

Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the purchase of a work by Edith Simon (1917-2003).

Main report

- 2 The following 'scalpel painting' by Edith Simon is offered for sale:

Title: Kinny Garden posing in the Studio

Date: 1984

Medium: layered paper

Inscriptions Edith Simon, 1984 (bottom left)

Size: 122 x 122 cm

- 3 When Edith Simon died earlier this year, Edinburgh and the Scottish art world lost a very unique and distinctive character. Edith Simon was addicted to both painting and writing from childhood. She became a student at the Slade School of Art in London at the age of 15, and later joined the Central School of Arts and Crafts. She published the first of her 17 books at the age of 23. At one time she wrote for Time-Life, and was a contributor to the Encyclopaedia Britannica.
- 4 As the wife of geneticist Dr E C R Reeve, she settled in Edinburgh some 40 years ago, and changed direction to concentrate on painting and sculpture within the last 20 years. In that time she perfected a way of working that she termed 'Scalpel-Painting'. The method involved creating an image by cutting with a scalpel through sheets of coloured paper, often up to 10 layers thick. At the beginning, the sheets were stapled together in a carefully selected sequence, and placed vertically on an easel or wall. Then they were cut into, so as to expose different shapes on different levels. The results were often quite remarkable given the complexity of the technique.

- 5 Edith Simon's Festival exhibitions became a regular feature of each summer, and although she suffered through ill health in later years, she continued to work with vigour and enthusiasm up until the last few months of her life. She was a keen supporter of the City Art Centre, and a regular attender at the gallery's openings, lectures and other events.
- 6 The work is being sold by the artist's family. The price is £1,000. Should the Committee agree to its purchase, grant aid would be sought from the National Fund for Acquisitions.

Recommendations

- 7 Acquire the 'scalpel painting' *Kinny Garden posing in the Studio*.



Herbert Coutts
Director of Culture and Leisure

25.11.03

Appendices	N/A
Contact/tel	Ian O'Riordan 0131-529 3955
Wards affected	City Wide
Background Papers	The Jean F Watson Bequest files are held by the Museums and Arts Division