

## Purchase of paintings by Victoria Crowe

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### Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

30 November 2007

#### Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the purchase of one or more paintings by Victoria Crowe, OBE, RSW, RSA (b.1945)

#### Main report

2. The following paintings by Victoria Crowe, OBE, RSA, RSW are presented to the Committee for consideration:

**Snowbound Cottages**

Oil on board, 1977

91.5 x 122cm

Price: £10,000

**Private View with Plastic Tulips**

1987, oil on board

106.7 x 86.4cm

Price: £10,000

**Last Portrait of Jenny Armstrong**

1986/7, oil on board

122 x 91.5cm

Price: £10,000

**Italian Reflections**

1992/93, oil on board

76.2 x 91.5cm

Price: £9,500

**Learning Italian**

2004, oil on linen

91.5 x 101.5

Price: £9,500

**Dancer and Graffiti**

2004, oil on linen

127 x 127cm

Price: £12,000

3. Victoria Crowe is one of Scotland's most consistent and thoughtful artists. Although she was born and studied in London, she has a longstanding association with Scotland. She lectured in drawing and painting at Edinburgh College of Art for thirty years from 1968, has exhibited regularly with the Scottish Gallery, and with her husband and fellow artist Mike Walton, lives in the Scottish Borders.
4. In 2000 the Scottish National Portrait Gallery mounted an exhibition of 50 or so of Crowe's paintings and drawings. Entitled '*A Shepherd's Life, Paintings of Jenny Armstrong*', the exhibition documented the remarkable life of a professional shepherd working in the Pentland Hills. The works spanned a period of 20 years, from their first meeting until Jenny's death in 1985. The exhibition told the unfolding story of an unlikely friendship between a rugged shepherd and young urban artist. It was highly acclaimed at the time, not only because of the human qualities that the paintings illustrated, but for the beauty and sensitivity of the paintings themselves.
5. Many of the paintings from this remarkable series have been sold, but a few have remained with the artist, and we are delighted that she has allowed us to choose three of these for consideration. Of these, the 'Last Portrait of Jenny Armstrong' is, in the artist's own words "a pivotal painting. It links her rural story to her old age and infirmity". Should the panel decide to acquire this particular work, all proceeds would go to the Ben Walton charity, set up by Victoria and Mike to commemorate their son Ben who died of cancer in 1995. In 2009, the Scottish National Portrait Gallery exhibition is being re-assembled in London, and will be shown at the Flemings Gallery to coincide with a new edition of the accompanying book.
6. The selection also includes more recent work by Crowe. These were exhibited as part of an exhibition at the Scottish Gallery in 2004. They reveal the same thoughtfulness as the previous works, but now imbued with light and colour. In 1992 Crowe made her visit prolonged visit to Italy, and its light, art and history prompted a new beginning in the artist's work. A muted palette of colours gave way to radiant blues, reds and oranges, and classical statues combine with flowers and figures, text and pattern.
7. The City already has a number of other works by the artist, including portraits of Dr Winifred Rushforth and former Lord Provost Tom Morgan, completed in 1988. A print by the artist was acquired at the last Committee meeting. Crowe is a senior artist with an established

reputation. This is a rare opportunity to buy from what was a seminal series, as well as more recent examples.

8. The works are being sold by the artist. The prices at which the paintings are being offered to the City Art Centre include a considerable discount on the original prices. If the Committee approves the purchase one or more works, the artist has generously offered to donate some related prints to the collection. Also, if the Committee approves the purchase, an application for grant aid would be lodged with the National Fund for Acquisitions.

### **Recommendations**

9. Approve the purchase of one or more paintings by Victoria Crowe.



22/11/07

**JIM INCH**  
Director, Corporate Services

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<b>Appendices</b>	None
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<b>Wards affected</b>	City Wide
<b>Background Papers</b>	The Jean F Watson Bequest files are held at the City Art Centre