

## Purchase of works by Peter Howson

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### Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

30 November 2007

#### Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the purchase of a group of works by Peter Howson (b.1958)

#### Main report

2. The following works by Peter Howson are presented to the Committee for consideration:

**Study for the Proconsul**

2006, sepia wax crayon on tinted paper  
Price: £960.00

**Study for Backstreet Crucifixion**

2006, oil on gessoed oak panel  
Price: £8,700.00

**Andrew**

Wax crayon and white gouache on black paper  
Price: £1,200.00

**Greece**

Pencil on gessoed oak panel  
Price: £7,000.00

**Saint Andrew in Middle Age**

Pen and gouache on tinted paper  
Price: £520.00

3. Peter Howson is one of Scotland's leading contemporary artists. Born in London, Howson's family moved to Ayr when he was still a boy. A

lonely child who was bullied at school, he found respite in drawing, and from an early age he would spend long hours sketching and copying from books. His first attempt at Art School was short lived, and on a whim he enrolled in the army. His army experience was disastrous, and he bought himself out as soon as possible.

4. Back at Glasgow School of Art, his army drawings were discovered by tutor Sandy Moffat, and under his guidance, Howson developed a bold figurative style. Along with fellow students Adrian Wisniewski, Ken Currie and Steven Campbell, the 'New Glasgow Boys' (as they were called), burst on the art world in the mid 1980s. Within a few years of graduating, Howson had work in the Tate Gallery and the Museum of Modern Art in New York.
5. In 1991 Howson was chosen by the Imperial War Museum as the official war artist for the ongoing conflict in Bosnia. He made two separate visits, and the experience had a profound influence on his life and work. The inhuman cruelty that he witnessed was made all the more difficult to understand by the natural beauty of the country itself.
6. Over the next few years, Howson's personal life and work deteriorated. By 2000 he was, by his own admission, living in a drug and drink filled haze most of the time. The near loss of his only daughter brought him to his senses, and since then his life has been on a more even keel, inspired by a new found Christian faith.
7. In the spring of 2005 the City Art Centre sent a speculative letter to Peter Howson, asking if he would consider completing a painting on the theme of Scotland's Patron Saint. The context for the letter was a major loan exhibition on the same theme which was under consideration at that time. Peter got in touch towards the end of 2005 saying that he would like to discuss the idea further.
8. At our first meeting we outlined our concepts for the larger show. As we left he promised to give it some further thought. A couple of months later he phoned to say that, not only had he been to Israel to study the region and the people where Andrew would have lived, but that he had already completed well over 50 studies on the subject! Around the same time, it became clear that the larger loan project would have to be postponed. So it was an easy decision to ask Peter if he would consider a one person show. The resulting exhibition had over 100 works, and was covered by BBC television, radio and press.
9. The works before the panel were selected from this exhibition. They demonstrate the breadth and unique talent of the artist. Underpinning everything is his consummate skill as a draughtsman, whether working in chalk, crayon, oil or ink. The selection includes preliminary studies as well as fully worked up compositions. The prices include a 20% gallery discount.

10. If the Committee approves the purchase, an application for grant aid would be lodged with the National Fund for Acquisitions.

**Recommendations**

11. Approve the purchase of a selection of works by Peter Howson.



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