

Purchase of a work by David Mach

Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

12 October 2011

Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the purchase of a work by David Mach (born in 1956).

Main report

- 2 The following selection of works by David Mach is presented to the Committee for consideration:

Die Harder

Coathanger sculpture
Approx 3m x 2.5m
£250,000

Noah's Ark 1

Collage
244 x 424.5cms
£112,000

Jacob's Ladder

Collage
234.8 x 271.2cms
£56,000

Jesus walking on Water

Collage
166 x 259.1cms
£46,000

Heaven

Collage
172cms diameter
£32,000

Hell

Collage

172cms diameter

£32,000

- 3 David Mach was born in Methil in Fife. He studied At Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee from 1974 – 79, and then at the Royal College of Art, London from 1979 – 82. Like other British sculptors who came to prominence in the early 1980s, Mach sought to use obsolete or superfluous manufactured items in his work. But whereas these other sculptors then embellished or adapted these materials, Mach worked in way which usually left the components unaltered.
- 4 In 1983, a year after he graduated from RCA, he completed his first major outdoor piece, a half submerged Polaris nuclear submarine made from car tyres which was exhibited at the Hayward Gallery in London. In an ironic twist, the work was destroyed in an act of vandalism, which served to bring the artist to the attention of the British media.
- 5 In the next few years, Mach embarked on a series of ever more ambitious sculptures and installations. In his biggest installations, lorries, cars, golf buggies and even a light aircraft have been commandeered by the artist, often swept up in great avalanches of books and magazines.
- 6 Over the last twenty years Mach has exhibited all over the world. In Scotland he is perhaps best known for his *Big Heids* sculpture which is sited on the left of the M8 on the approach to Glasgow. In Edinburgh in 1994 he constructed the monumental *Temple at Tyre* at Leith Docks, an acropolis made from tyres that sat atop a 'mountain' made from shipping containers.
- 7 David Mach is represented in major public collections in Britain and worldwide including the National Galleries of Scotland; Tate; National Portrait Gallery; Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego; Kawasaki City Museum, Tokyo; and the Auckland Art Gallery in New Zealand.
- 8 Mach's current exhibition at the City Art Centre, '*Precious Light*', has been an outstanding success. It has received widespread critical acclaim and was voted the Best Visual Art Show of this year's International Festival by The Herald newspaper. Visitors have filled our Comments Books with praise for the scale and ambition of the exhibition as well as the range of work on show.
- 9 A selection of works from the exhibition is presented to the panel for their consideration, representing a range of medium, scale and price. The artist has expressed a wish that the Council might acquire one of the larger works from the show on behalf of the city and has considerably reduced the gallery price of *Die Harder*, which would be his preferred option. While it would be ideal to mark the exhibition with a purchase, the size of some of the pieces present considerable issues regarding ongoing storage and future display unless a semi-permanent site can be found within the city. At the same time, it is recognised that the subject matter might also offer challenges, so the above

selection includes works which are perhaps not so rooted within the Biblical narrative.

- 10 The City Collection already contains three works by Mach – a match head portrait of Richard Demarco, an early small scale collage, and a postcard portrait of Aung San Suu Kyi, the Burmese opposition politician and General Secretary of the National League for Democracy.

Financial Implications

- 11 The funds for the purchase of one of the works by David Mach will come from the Jean F Watson Bequest. Grant aid will be sought from the National Fund for Acquisitions, The Art Fund, The Friends of the City Art Centre and Museums and, where appropriate, The National Lottery.

Equalities Impact

- 12 The contents of this report are not relevant to the public sector equality duty of the Equality Act 2010.

Environmental impact

- 13 There is no direct environmental impact arising from this report.

Recommendations

- 14 It is recommended that the Committee:
- a) approves the purchase of one of the artworks listed at paragraph 2, subject to successful external funding applications; and
 - b) notes that progress will be reported to the next meeting.

Alastair Maclean
Director of Corporate Governance

Appendices

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Wards affected	All
Single Outcome Agreement	Supports National Outcome 1: “We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe”
Background Papers	The Jean F Watson Bequest files are held at the City Art Centre