

Committee on the Jean F. Watson Bequest

10am, Friday, 15 December 2017

Purchase of D'Arcy Thompson Print Portfolio

Item number	5.2
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	

Executive summary

Committee is asked to approve the purchase of a limited edition copy of the D'Arcy Thompson Print Portfolio, containing fourteen original prints by sixteen contemporary artists.

Purchase of D'Arcy Thompson Print Portfolio

Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the purchase of a limited edition copy of the D'Arcy Thompson Print Portfolio, containing fourteen original prints by sixteen contemporary artists.

Background

- 2.1 The City Art Centre's fine art collection traces the development of Scottish art from the 17th century until present day. Acquisitions of new work by contemporary artists are an important part of ensuring that the collection continues to provide a comprehensive overview of Scottish art for future generations.

Main report

- 3.1 The following portfolio of original prints is presented to the Committee for consideration:

D'Arcy Thompson Print Portfolio

Fourteen original prints by sixteen contemporary artists presented in a special edition portfolio box, 2013

Edition 3/12

£1,500

- Delia Baillie, *Great Granny Structuralism*, 2013, digital screenprint on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)
- Calum Colvin, *Orpheus and the Beasts*, 2013, photo polymer intaglio etching on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)
- Dalziel + Scullion, *Primates*, 2013, digital print on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)

- Graham Fagen, *Growth & Form*, 2013, silkscreen print on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)
- Gareth Fisher, *Co Existing*, 2013, three colour stone lithograph on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)
- Paul Harrison, *Modified Crop (Test 1)*, 2013, acrylic screenprint on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)
- Mark Hunter, *Chicken*, 2013, waterless lithograph on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)
- Tracy Mackenna and Edwin Janssen, *Taboo Materialised*, 2013, digital print on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)
- Jim Pattison, *Koala*, 2013, waterless lithograph on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)
- Norman Shaw, *D'Archon*, 2013, photo etching on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)
- Elaine Shemilt, *Decapoda*, 2013, blind embossed print on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)
- Iain Sturrock, *The Swan*, 2013, waterless lithograph on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)
- Edward Summerton, *Growths and Deforms*, 2013, digital print on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)
- Peter Yearworth, *Evolution*, 2013, photo / direct gravure on paper, edition 3/12, 30.5 x 30.5cm (unframed)

3.2 In 2011 the University of Dundee Museum Services received a grant from the Art Fund RENEW Scheme to build a collection of modern and contemporary artworks inspired by the pioneering Scottish biologist D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson (1860-1948). As an offshoot of this project, the University of Dundee Museum Services commissioned sixteen leading contemporary artists from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design in Dundee to create a portfolio of new prints which draw on D'Arcy Thompson's ideas and research, as well as the specimens in his Zoology Museum.

- 3.3 Edinburgh-born biologist D’Arcy Thompson was the first professor of Biology at University College, Dundee (now known as the University of Dundee). He went on to become the Chair of Natural History at the University of St Andrews. Although he carried out research in a variety of areas, he is best-known for his ground-breaking book *On Growth and Form*, which was published in 1917. In *On Growth and Form* Thompson suggested that the development of all living organisms is influenced by physical and mathematical laws. The book laid the foundations for the future study of biomathematics, but it also had a lasting impact on other fields of research, including computer science, cybernetics, anthropology and architectural design. Over the years, visual artists have also found Thompson’s work to be an enduring source of inspiration. Artists as diverse as Jackson Pollock, Richard Hamilton, Eduardo Paolozzi, Salvador Dalí, Will Maclean, Susan Derges and Daniel Brown have all been influenced by *On Growth and Form*. Thompson himself was a keen patron of the arts, and welcomed interdisciplinary approaches across subject areas. As the art critic Herbert Read told Thompson “you have built the bridge between science and art”.
- 3.4 Between November 2016 and February 2017 the City Art Centre staged the exhibition ‘A Sketch of the Universe: Art, Science and the Influence of D’Arcy Thompson’ in collaboration with the University of Dundee Museum Services. The exhibition was timed to coincide with the 2017 centenary of the publication of *On Growth and Form*. It showcased the highlights of the University of Dundee’s D’Arcy Thompson Art Collection, featuring work by a range of modern and contemporary artists, from established figures like Henry Moore, Victor Pasmore and Salvador Dalí to recent graduates of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design. The display of over 90 artworks was supplemented by a selection of zoological specimens and teaching models from the D’Arcy Thompson Zoology Museum. The exhibition received overwhelmingly positive public and critical feedback, including a 4-star review in the *Scotsman*.
- 3.5 The D’Arcy Thompson Print Portfolio was displayed as part of the exhibition ‘A Sketch of the Universe’. It comprises work by sixteen contemporary artists based at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design: Delia Baillie, Calum Colvin, Dalziel + Scullion, Graham Fagen, Gareth Fisher, Paul Harrison, Mark Hunter, Tracy Mackenna & Edwin Janssen, Jim Pattison, Norman Shaw, Elaine Shemilt, Iain Sturrock, Edward Summerton and Peter Yearworth. Each print is inspired in some way by D’Arcy Thompson. Some images, such as *Primates* by Dalziel + Scullion or *Decapoda* by Elaine Shemilt, relate to specific specimens in the D’Arcy Thompson Zoology Museum. Others, such as *Modified Crop (Test 1)* by Paul Harrison or *Growths and Deforms* by Edward Summerton, are influenced more generally by Thompson’s theories and research. The portfolio demonstrates a variety of printmaking techniques, including lithography,

screenprinting, photo etching and digital printing. For the exhibition 'A Sketch of the Universe' each print was framed individually and displayed in a group formation (see Fig. 1).



(Fig. 1)

- 3.6 The D'Arcy Thompson Print Portfolio was printed at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, under the supervision of Mark Hunter and Jim Pattison. It was produced as an edition of 12, with 3 printers' proofs. Each print measures 30.5 x 30.5cm, and is signed and editioned by the artist. The portfolio also contains an introduction by Matthew Jarron (Curator of Museum Services at the University of Dundee), and written statements by each of the artists.
- 3.7 The artists featured in the D'Arcy Thompson Print Portfolio are considered as leading contemporary artists working in Scotland. In 2014 Dalziel + Scullion and Graham Fagen were included in the nationwide exhibition project 'GENERATION: 25 Years of Contemporary Art in Scotland'. These artists have also represented Scotland at the Venice Biennale. The work of all sixteen artists can be found in public and private collections, both nationally and internationally.
- 3.8 Very few of these artists are already represented in the City Art Centre's fine art collection. The City Art Centre holds three works by Calum Colvin (all dating from the 1990s) and one work by Graham Fagen (dating from 1999), but nothing by any of the other artists. The current opportunity to purchase a limited edition copy of the D'Arcy Thompson Print Portfolio is therefore a chance to add fourteen new artists to the City Art Centre's holdings of Scottish contemporary

art, strengthening and diversifying this part of the collection. It is also an opportunity to further mark the centenary of the publication of *On Growth and Form*, and to ensure that the exhibition 'A Sketch of the Universe' has a lasting legacy within the City Art Centre.

- 3.9 The D'Arcy Thompson Print Portfolio (edition number 3 of 12) is being offered for sale to the City Art Centre by the University of Dundee Museum Services. All proceeds from the sale will go directly towards supporting the University of Dundee's ongoing work to engage artists with D'Arcy Thompson's work, and to facilitate residencies and exhibitions with the Zoology Museum. The portfolio is currently on reserve for consideration by the Jean F. Watson Committee.

Measures of success

- 4.1 Completed purchase of the D'Arcy Thompson Print Portfolio.

Financial impact

- 5.1 The total cost of the D'Arcy Thompson Print Portfolio is £1,500. Funds for this purchase can be made available from the Jean F. Watson Bequest, and it is intended that an application for grant aid will be submitted to the National Fund for Acquisitions, administered on behalf of the Scottish Government by the National Museums of Scotland.

Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 Not applicable.

Equalities impact

- 7.1 Not applicable.

Sustainability impact

- 8.1 Not applicable.

Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Not applicable.

Background reading / external references

- D'Arcy Thompson Zoology Museum – Art Collection:
<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/museum/collections/zoology/art/>
- D'Arcy Thompson Zoology Museum - RENEW Project:
<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/museum/collections/zoology/renew/>
- The D'Arcy Thompson Print Folio:
<https://www.dundee.ac.uk/museum/collections/zoology/printfolio/>
- 'A Sketch of the Universe: Art, Science and the Influence of D'Arcy Thompson', City Art Centre Website: <http://www.edinburghmuseums.org.uk/Venues/City-Art-Centre/Exhibitions/2016-17/A-Sketch-of-the-Universe--Art,-Science-and-the-Inf>
- Mansfield, Susan: 'Art Review - A Sketch of the Universe: Art, Science and the Influence of D'Arcy Thompson', *The List*, 30 November 2016
<https://www.list.co.uk/article/86761-a-sketch-of-the-universe-art-science-and-the-influence-of-darcy-thompson/>
- Macmillan, Duncan: 'Art Review - A Sketch of the Universe: Art, Science and the Influence of D'Arcy Thompson', *The Scotsman*, 7 December 2016
<http://www.scotsman.com/lifestyle/culture/art/art-review-a-sketch-of-the-universe-art-science-and-the-influence-of-d-arcy-thompson-1-4311016>
- Ings, Simon: 'Review - D'Arcy Wentworth Thompson, The Man who Shaped Biology and Art', *New Scientist*, 1 February 2017
<https://www.newscientist.com/article/2120057-darcy-wentworth-thompson-the-man-who-shaped-biology-and-art/>

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Appendices

None.