

# Committee on the Jean F. Watson Bequest

10am, Friday, 15 November 2017

## Purchase of a video work by Roderick Buchanan

Item number	5.6
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	
Council Commitments	

### Executive Summary

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Committee is asked to approve the purchase of a video artwork entitled *Understanding versus Sympathy* by Roderick Buchanan (b.1965).

## Purchase of a video work by Roderick Buchanan

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the purchase of the video artwork entitled *Understanding versus Sympathy* by Roderick Buchanan.

### 2. Background

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- 2.1 The City Art Centre's fine art collection traces the development of Scottish art from 17<sup>th</sup> 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.

### 3. Main report

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- 3.1 The following video by Roderick Buchanan (b.1965) is presented to the Committee for consideration:

**Understanding versus Sympathy**

Video, 1 hour 30 minutes, 2016

Commissioned by Edinburgh Art Festival with support from the Scottish Government's Edinburgh Festivals Expo Fund, 2016

Price: £8,000



- 3.2 Roderick Buchanan is a Scottish born artist working in the fields of installation, film and photography. After attending Thomas Muir High School, he studied at Glasgow School of Art in the 1980s, where he was part of a group later described as 'The Irascibles', which included fellow students Douglas Gordon, Ross Sinclair, Jacqueline Donachie, Christine Borland, and Martin Boyce. He also studied at the University of Ulster in Belfast.
- 3.3 In 2000 Buchanan won the inaugural *Beck's Futures* prize for his work 'Gobstopper', a video of children trying to hold their breath while being driven through Glasgow's Clyde Tunnel. He has had solo exhibitions at Dundee Contemporary Arts, and his work is held in the collections of the Tate and the National Galleries of Scotland.
- 3.4 In 2011 Buchanan exhibited '*Legacy*' at the Imperial War Museum in London. The work, a video and installation commissioned by the museum, depicted Scottish bands from the Irish Republican and British Unionist communities performing in Northern Ireland. It was subsequently exhibited at the Scottish National Portrait Gallery.
- 3.5 This latest work, *Understanding versus Sympathy*, continues to explore his interest in the links between Scotland and Ireland. It is a video portrait of eminent Irish historian Owen Dudley Edwards explored through the prism of Dudley Edward's lifelong engagement with the ideas of James Connolly. A key figure in the 1916 Easter Rising and widely commemorated across Ireland, it is less well known that

James Connolly was born in Edinburgh. Now residing in Edinburgh, author Dudley Edwards is central to the city's intellectual public life and through a lifetime of research and study can reach back further than most into the collective memory of the city. He is an Honorary Fellow of the University of Edinburgh.

- 3.6 The video was first shown as part of the 2016 Edinburgh Art Festival, in the memorial chapel of St Patrick's Church in the Cowgate.
- 3.7 James Connolly, born in the Cowgate area of Edinburgh, became a militant activist in Dublin. Owen Dudley Edwards, from Dublin, found an intellectual home in Edinburgh. *Understanding versus Sympathy* reflects on the intertwined lives of these two figures. A short extract from the video can be viewed here: <https://vimeo.com/175677135>
- 3.8 The film has been made in an edition of 3 - Buchanan took the decision very early on in his career that he would produce his films in editions of three, with the intention that one edition would go into a public collection, one into a private collection, and that he would retain a copy for his archives. If the Committee decide to purchase this work, we would be the sole public collection in possession of a copy.
- 3.9 Buchanan is not presently represented by a gallery, so this work is being sold directly by the artist via the Edinburgh Art Festival. Works of this nature are difficult to value, so we have sought an independent assessment of the work from a contemporary commercial gallery in Glasgow. They valued the work at £15,000 and the artists has offered the work for £8,000.
- 3.10 Roderick Buchanan is not currently represented in the City's collection. This would be a significant acquisition of a work by an important contemporary Scottish artist, and would join works already in the collection by his contemporaries Christine Borland and Martin Boyce.

#### **4. Measures of success**

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- 4.1 Completed purchase of *Understanding versus Sympathy* by Roderick Buchanan.

#### **5. Financial impact**

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- 5.1 The total cost of the video artwork is £8,000. 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.

#### **6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact**

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- 6.1 Not applicable.

## **7. Equalities impact**

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7.1 Not applicable.

## **8. Sustainability impact**

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8.1 Not applicable.

## **9. Consultation and engagement**

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9.1 Not applicable.

## **10. Background reading/external references**

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10.1 <https://edinburghartfestival.com/whats-on/detail/Roderick-Buchanan-Understanding-versus-Sympathy>

### **Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

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## **11. Appendices**

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None