

## Possible Commission by David Mach

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### Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

28 June 2005

#### Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the possible commission of a work by David Mach to commemorate the granting of the Freedom of the City of Edinburgh to Aung San Sui Kyi.

#### Main report

- 2 On Saturday 18 June, Aung San Suu Kyi, the Head of the National League for Democracy in Burma, was conferred the Freedom of the City of Edinburgh. The award was granted in recognition of her personal courage and relentless pursuit of democratic justice in Burma. Aung San Suu Kyi remains under house arrest. The 18<sup>th</sup> June was chosen as the date for the award as it also marked Aung San Suu Kyi's sixtieth birthday.
- 3 The granting of the award received full support from all parties within the City Council. It is the wish of the steering group that the event should be commemorated in some more permanent way, and it was suggested that a portrait of her be commissioned.
- 4 David Mach is an internationally renowned Scottish artist, now based in London. He first came to prominence in the 1980s with his sculptural installations, which made use of a range of disposable materials including wire, bottles, coathangers and magazines. In Edinburgh he is perhaps best remembered for The Temple at Tyre, the huge installation created using shipping containers and car tyres sculpted into a mini 'Parthenon'. He is an artist who continues to push the boundaries of sculptural practice.
- 5 Since 1982 David Mach had been making large collaged portraits out of postcards. The first one came as a result of an accident – *"The postcard collages grew directly out of working with magazines, in fact out of one particular magazine sculpture I made for a show in Rotterdam in 1982. I was making the image of a chopped down tree, making the long trunk of the tree in two halves, when what looked a bit like a dug-out canoe*

*collapsed, splashing onto the gallery floor, like waves on the shore. The postcard collages I make today are direct descendants of that first collage piece. I still try to explore the possibilities of animation and fluidity within this process, trying to establish a relationship between the base material - the postcards - and the image collaged on top."*

- 6 Over the years, Mach has made various portraits in this way. Sitters have included Sir Alex Ferguson, Gavin Hastings, Sir Tom Farmer and Richard Branson. Following up on the steering group's recommendation, and initial approach was made to the artist. He responded immediately and with enthusiasm, not least because he was already fully aware and supportive of Aung San Suu Kyi's plight and that of the Burmese people.
- 7 The estimated cost of a 6 feet square collaged postcard portrait is £18,000. However, there are still one or two barriers to be overcome before the work can be made. Under normal circumstances, the artist takes the photograph upon which the final work is based himself. As this is not possible in this instance, a suitable image needs to be found, and clearance given. Moreover, the artist would like to make use of existing 'tourist' postcards showing the Burmese landscape, and these require sourcing.
- 8 It should be noted that commissioned works are ineligible for grant aid through the National Fund for Acquisitions.

### **Recommendations**

- 9 Authorise continued negotiations with the artist.
- 10 Explore potential external avenues of funding.



**Herbert Coutts**  
Director of Culture and Leisure

27:6:05

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<b>Appendices</b>	N/A
<b>Contact/tel</b>	Ian O’Riordan 0131-529 3955
<b>Wards affected</b>	City Wide
<b>Background Papers</b>	The Jean F Watson Bequest files are held by the Museums and Arts Division. The minutes of the Aung San Suu KYi Steering Group are held by Faye Gatenby, Corporate Services Department.