

## Purchase of a drawing by Elizabeth Blackadder

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### Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

12 October 2006

#### Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the purchase of a drawing by Elizabeth Blackadder (b.1931).

#### Main report

2. The following drawing by Dame Elizabeth Blackadder is presented to the Committee for consideration:

##### **View over North Bridge**

Pencil on paper

Insc bottom right: *Elizabeth V Blackadder 1972*

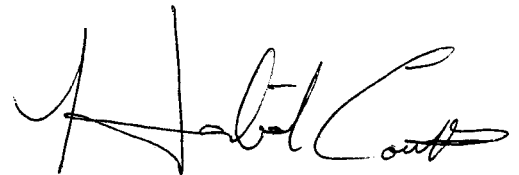
Price: £1200.00

- 3 Dame Elizabeth Blackadder is one of the best known artists at work today in Britain. Born in 1931 in Falkirk, Elizabeth trained at Edinburgh College of Art and it was there that she met John Houston, whom she married in 1956. In a distinguished career, she has exhibited widely at home and abroad, and is the first woman to be elected to both the Royal Academy and the Royal Scottish Academy. Her work has evolved from a community of painters who flourished in Scotland in the middle decades of the twentieth century. Particularly influential on her early style was Sir William Gillies, whom she studied under at the Art College and alongside whom she later taught. Several other leading women artists – Penelope Beaton, Anne Redpath and Joan Eardley – were also working and exhibiting during the early stages of Elizabeth's career.
4. The drawing under consideration depicts a view of the Old Town from Calton Hill. Completed in 1972 for a print project that was never in the end completed, it is a rapid, free study of this well known view. The drawing, which spans two leaves of a sketchbook, gives a wonderful insight into the artist's working methods. Working quickly, she has blocked in the main elements of the composition. Largely ignoring the foreground St Andrew's House, her attention is fixed on the North Bridge and Old Town skyline as it moves up towards the Castle. She works into the drawing, filling in detail where necessary, rubbing out parts that no longer satisfy, all the while keeping the main composition clearly in her mind.

5. The City Council already possesses a number of works by this important artist, and she has just recently accepted a commission to paint a portrait of former Lord Provost Eric Milligan. This would, however, represent only the second work that has Edinburgh as its subject matter, the other being an oil painting of Princes Street Gardens from 1966. As the Committee will know, the artist has made her name through her delicate still life, flower and animal paintings.
6. The drawing is being sold on behalf of the artist by The Scottish Gallery, Dundas Street, Edinburgh. The price is £1200, which includes a gallery discount.

### **Recommendations**

7. Approve the purchase of the drawing by Elizabeth Blackadder.



**Herbert Coutts**  
Director of Culture and Leisure

5:10:06

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<b>Appendices</b>	N/A
<b>Contact/tel</b>	Ian O'Riordan      0131 529 3955 David Patterson    0131 529 3575
<b>Wards affected</b>	City Wide
<b>Background Papers</b>	The Jean F Watson Bequest files are held by the Museums and Arts Division