

Purchase of a photograph by Albert Watson

Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

12 October 2006

Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the purchase of a photograph by Albert Watson (b. 1942).

Main report

2. The following photograph by Albert Watson is presented to the Committee for consideration:

Standing Stones, The Orkneys, Scotland, 1991

Photograph, mounted on aluminium, framed.

248 x 185.5cms

Price: \$3,000 (approximately £1,600)

3. Albert Watson has made his mark as one of the world's most successful fashion and commercial photographers during the last three decades, while creating his own art along the way. Over the years, his striking images have appeared on more than 250 covers of *Vogue* and have been featured in countless other publications, from *Rolling Stone* to *Time* to *Vibe* - many of the photographs iconic portraits of rock stars, rappers, actors and other celebrities. Albert was the official Royal Photographer for Prince Andrew's wedding to Sarah Ferguson, and is the Official Photographer of the King of Morocco.
4. Albert also has created the photography for hundreds of successful advertising campaigns for major corporations, such as the *Gap*, *Levi's*, *Revlon* and *Chanel*, and he has shot some 500 TV commercials. All the while, he has spent much of his time working on his own art, creating stunning images from his worldwide travels, from Marrakech to Las Vegas to the Orkneys
5. Born and raised in Edinburgh, Watson studied graphic design at the College of Art in Dundee and film at the Royal Academy of Art in London. Though blind in one eye since birth, he studied photography as part of his curriculum. In 1970, he moved to the United States with his wife, Elizabeth, who got a job as an elementary school teacher in Los Angeles, where Albert began shooting photos, mostly as a hobby.

6. Later that year, Albert was introduced to an art director at *Max Factor*, who offered him his first session, from which the company bought two shots. Albert's distinctive style eventually caught the attention of American and European fashion magazines such as *Mademoiselle*, *GQ* and *Harper's Bazaar*, and he began commuting between Los Angeles and New York. In 1976, Albert landed his first job for *Vogue*, and his move to New York in the same year shifted his career into high gear. More recently, Albert has moved into the film and television industry. He has now directed more than 500 television commercials, and was responsible for the promotional photography on films such as *Kill Bill* and the *Da Vinci Code*.
7. Despite the stress from all of his commissioned assignments, Albert devotes much of his time to extensive personal projects, and he has published two books, *Cyclops* and *Maroc*, and is working on a third, *Shot in Vegas*, due out later this year. Without a doubt, Albert Watson is an artist who greatly enriches our perception by his unique photographic view. Though the wide variety of his images reflects an effortless versatility, they are nevertheless identifiable as Albert Watson photographs by their sheer power and technical virtuosity - whether it's a portrait of a Las Vegas dominatrix or a close-up of King Tutankhamen's glove. This single-minded commitment to perfection has made Albert one of the world's most sought-after photographers.
8. In recognition of the City's commitment in staging his first exhibition in Scotland, Albert has generously offered the photograph to the Council for \$3,000 (approximately £1,600). This represents a substantial saving on what a similar photograph might fetch on the open market.

Recommendations

9. Approve the purchase of the photograph *Standing Stones, The Orkneys, Scotland, 1991* by Albert Watson.



Herbert Coutts
Director of Culture and Leisure

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