

Purchase of a photographic diptych by Wendy McMurdo

Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

12 October 2006

Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the purchase of a photographic diptych by Wendy McMurdo (b.1965).

Main report

2. The following photographic diptych by Wendy McMurdo is presented to the Committee for consideration:

Computer Class I and II

Colour negative prints

Each 120 x 120cms

Price: £8, 850

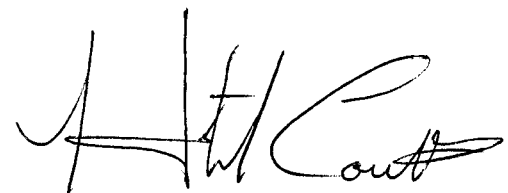
- 3 Born in Edinburgh in 1962, Wendy McMurdo studied fine art at Edinburgh College of Art. In the mid 1980s she completed further study at the Pratt Institute in New York and thereafter finished her MA at Goldsmiths College in London in 1993, when she was awarded a Henry Moore Foundation Research Fellowship. From 1998-2000 McMurdo was appointed Leverhulme Special Research Fellow at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art in Dundee. From 1995-2000, she developed a series of works which examined the ways in which technological developments in the bio-medical sciences in particular affected our view of our selves. Recent commissions have included the Science Museum in London, and the Scottish National Portrait Gallery, Edinburgh in association with the Roslin Institute. The artist lives and works in Edinburgh.
4. She has exhibited widely in group and solo shows, the most recent of which were at the Macedonian Museum of Contemporary Art in Thessaloniki, Greece, at the Lewis Glucksman Gallery in Cork and as part of *Only Make Believe* curated by Marina Warner at Compton Verney in Warwickshire. Her work has been included in two recent major publications on Contemporary Photography: Phaidon's *Art and Photography* edited by David Company and

Thames and Hudson's *The Photograph as Contemporary Art* edited by Charlotte Cotton.

5. From the mid 1990s, McMurdo has combined traditional photographic skills with the use of digital media. Among her latest work are a series of images dealing with the isolation of children in their own space. *Computer Class I and II* was produced in 1997. It was produced as a direct response to a digital project set up to look at ways in which new technologies were affecting early learning. The work was shot initially at Bruntsfield Primary School in Edinburgh which was, at that time, one of the first Primary Schools in Edinburgh to introduce basic BBC computers into early education (primary 1 and beyond).
6. In *Computer Class 1 and 2*, she has pictured two children using their computers in a classroom, which have then been digitally removed from the photograph. By eliminating the object of their attention (leaving the children exposed in a digital space), the viewer is confronted with an absorbing depiction of a child preoccupied at work or play.
7. The diptych was subsequently exhibited internationally, most notably in 1999 as part of *Unheimlich* at the Fotomuseum in Winterthur, Switzerland. The diptych was then purchased for their collection – one of the most significant collections of contemporary photography in Europe.
8. The edition of *The Computer Class* diptych, shown as part of the recent *Face à Face* exhibition at the City Art Centre, was produced in 2005 for inclusion in the Compton Verney exhibition.
9. The diptych is being sold by the artist. The City Collection possesses two very early photographs by McMurdo from the late 1980s, produced at a time when she occupied the studio space on the gallery's second floor. Given her increasingly international profile, the acquisition of this work would fill a gap in our collection of contemporary Scottish photography.
10. The price is £8,850.00, which includes a gallery discount. If approved, an application for grant aid would be submitted to the National Fund for Acquisitions in due course.

Recommendations

11. Approve the purchase of the photographic diptych by Wendy McMurdo.



Herbert Coutts
Director of Culture and Leisure

5.10.06

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