

Purchase of three topographical works

Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

12 October 2006

Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the purchase of a group of three topographical views of Edinburgh.

Main report

2. The following three items, each depicting aspects of the city, are presented to the Committee for consideration:

A Room in Brodie's Close

Pencil on paper, 1926

By Ernest Lumsden

26 x 35cm

inscribed, top right: *ES Lumsden 1926*

Price: £300.00

Holyrood

Etching and drypoint on paper

By William Walcot (1874-1943)

Image size: 8 x 12.5cm

Inscribed, bottom right: *W Walcot*

Price: £295.00

House on Dean Bridge

Ink and watercolour on paper

By Carola Gordon

12.5 x 14cm

inscribed, bottom right: *C Gordon*

Price: £150.00

- 3 Ernest Stephen Lumsden was born in London. He studied at Reading School of Art under Morley Fletcher. In 1908, the same lecturer (by then in Edinburgh) invited Lumsden to join the staff of the College of Art, and he remained in Scotland until his death.

4. The drawing under consideration was commissioned from Lumsden to illustrate the second edition of a book by Glaswegian author James Bone, entitled *The Perambulator in Edinburgh*. Re-published in 1926, this drawing represents an interior Old Town view. In the book, the view is described as follows: "Then, there is the ceiling of Roman Eagle Hall in Brodie's Close, now a curiosity dealer's store where old silverware, pewter, court-swords, Venetian glass, and a thousand knick-knacks, lie about in indescribable confusion, as though the famous Deacon had just disappeared after an exceptionally busy week's burgling."
6. Brodie's Close, situated on the South side of the Lawnmarket, derived its name from Francis Brodie, father of the notorious William. In his 1947 book on the Royal Mile, William Dick reports that Masonic Lodge Roman Eagle No.160 once met in Brodie's Close, and it would seem likely that this was the Lodge room at one point in time.
7. William Walcot's beautifully crafted etching of a state procession at the Palace of Holyrood is surprisingly one of the few views of the Palace environs within the fine art collection. Born in Russia, Walcot studied as an architect at the Academy of St Petersburg, and in Paris. He settled in London in the early years of the 20th century, and soon abandoned architecture to pursue a career as an artist. In 1918, Walcot produced a fine series of prints of both Edinburgh and Glasgow, and it is likely that this etching might date from then.
8. The third work is by Edinburgh based artist, Carola Gordon. Gordon was born in 1940 in India and educated in South Africa. In 1977 she moved to Edinburgh, and her adopted city has been the subject matter for her paintings and drawings ever since. This particular work depicts Kirkbrae House at the very top of Bell's Brae, and adjacent to the Dean Bridge. This well known landmark was originally a 17th or 18th century tavern, and was converted into a much larger dwelling in 1892.
9. The three works are being offered for sale by The Open Eye Gallery, 34 Abercromby Place, Edinburgh. The total cost of three works is £745.

Recommendations

10. Approve the purchase of the group of the three topographical works.



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