

Purchase of a painting by Alan Shipway

Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

16 March 2009

Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the purchase of a painting by Alan Shipway (b.1956).

Main report

2. The following paintings by Alan Shipway are presented to the Committee for consideration:

Grey Spring

Acrylic on canvas, 2006
162.5 x 117cms
Price: £3,000

Last Month

Acrylic on canvas, 2007
162.5 x 126cm
Price: £3,000

Sea Change

Acrylic on canvas, 2007
173 x 112cm
Price: £3,000

Night Fall

Acrylic on canvas, 2008
153 x 118.5cm
Price: £2,750

3. Alan Shipway was born in 1956 in Edinburgh, where he continues to live and work. He took a degree in the history of architecture at the University of Edinburgh, and in 1979 completed the postgraduate advanced painting course at St Martin's School of Art in London. His

recent solo exhibitions have included those at the Ingleby Gallery in Edinburgh in 2005 and the Talbot Rice Gallery at the University of Edinburgh in 2002.

4. His work has been included in many group exhibitions, from *Contemporary Abstraction* at the Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh and *Offshore* (Neue Malerei aus England) at the Künstlerwerkstatt, Munich in the early 1980s, to more recently the *John Moores 23* in Liverpool, the *Absolut Open* at Inverleith House in Edinburgh, and *Beyond Appearances* at the City Art Centre. He has received two major awards from the Scottish Arts Council: a publishing award and a 12 month bursary. He contributes from time to time to *The Art Book* journal, reviews including the Barnett Newman and Mark Rothko catalogues raisonnés.
5. The paintings under consideration come from the last three years of Alan's work. Shipway belongs to the same abstract tradition in modern painting that began in the early twentieth century with artists such as Mondrian and Matisse, and was carried on into the post war period by American painters Mark Rothko, Morris Louis and others. Nearer to home, the Scottish painter John Mclean has been an enduring influence.
6. There is a sense of calmness and quiet about Shipway's paintings. The artist himself has said that he sees painting "as a kind of sanctuary", and that it should "point to something beyond the mundane aspects of everyday life".
7. Shipway's working methods give us a clue as to how he thinks about his work. Despite their apparent simplicity and emptiness, he will often work on a canvas over a period of months or even years, painting a little, putting it away, then taking it out months later and re-working it. In the same way, these are paintings to be lived with over a long period of time rather than viewed for a few moments.
8. Shipway's paintings do not have an obvious subject matter or meaning. Rather the artist wants us as the viewer to interpret them for ourselves. The recurring references in their titles to nature – the seasons, night and day, etc – are deliberate, because they echo the same feelings the artist himself experiences within nature.
9. The paintings are being offered for sale by the artist. The price includes a gallery discount. The City Art Centre does not at present have a work by Shipway in its collection. Should the Committee approve the purchase of a painting, an application for grant aid will be submitted to the National Fund for Acquisitions in the new financial year.

Financial Implications

10. The funds for the purchase of the painting will come from the Jean F Watson Bequest. Grant aid will be sought from the National Fund for Acquisitions administered by the National Museums of Scotland.

Environmental impact

11. N/A

Recommendations

12. Approve the purchase of a painting by Alan Shipway.


JIM INCH
Director, Corporate Services
06/03, 09

Appendices	None
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Wards affected	City Wide
Background Papers	The Jean F Watson Bequest files are held at the City Art Centre