

Purchase of a painting by Iain Robertson

Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

16 March 2009

Purpose of report

- 1 To consider the purchase of a painting by Iain Robertson (b.1955).

Main report

2. The following paintings by Iain Robertson are presented to the Committee for consideration:

Just Pleasure

Oil on canvas, 1998
152 x 60.5cms
Price: £3,000

Poco Loco

Oil on canvas, 1992
164.5 x 84cm
Price: £3,000

Jig

Oil on canvas, 1994
198 x 75.5cm
Price: £3,000

3. Iain Robertson was born in 1955 in Cyprus, and lived in Edinburgh from 1956 to 1978. He studied at Cumbria College of Art and Design in Carlisle in 1978/9 and at Exeter College of Art from 1979 to 1982. He worked at Spacex Studios in Exeter from 1982 to 1986 and lived in Bideford, North Devon from 1986 to 1988, when he moved to Edinburgh, where he lived until 1999. He now lives and works in St Ives in Cornwall, where he has a studio in the Porthmeor complex, where Ben Nicholson and Patrick Heron worked in the past.

4. Iain Robertson has had a number of one person exhibitions, including those at Spacex in 1984, the Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh in 1992, Galerie Moderne, Silkeborg, Denmark in 1995, Art First in London in 1998 and 2001, and Lemon Street Gallery, Truro in 2006. His work has also been included in two person exhibitions with his partner, Clare Wardman, and in group exhibitions, across the UK and abroad. He has been the recipient of a various awards, including from the Scottish Arts Council, the British Council and the Arts Council of England. His work is represented in public and private collections.
5. The paintings under consideration date from the 1990s when Iain Robertson was living in Edinburgh. They are abstract, very colourful and heavily impastoed. There are immediate resonances with the work of Alan Davie from the 60s and Gillian Ayers from the 70s and 80s. There is also a northern European strain in the work, showing the influence of the post-war CoBrA group and other strains of European abstraction. The three paintings under consideration are all painted in the distinctive tall thin shape that Robertson was using in the 90s.
6. All of Iain Robertson's paintings have a strong physical presence, accentuated by the substantial quantity of paint that is used on the canvas, creating a tremendous resonant vibrancy. The paintings are not intended to be understood in a cool cerebral way but responded to on an emotional level. They always contain what appear to be elements of crudely painted runic symbolism but with no decipherable message. Over the years, he has worked consistently in this style, with various slight variations in terms of size and shape.
7. The paintings are being offered by the artist and are very reasonably priced. The City does not at present have a work by Robertson in its collection. Should the panel 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


8. 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

9. N/A

Recommendations

10. Approve the purchase of a painting by Iain Robertson.


JIM INCH
Director, Corporate Services

Appendices	None
Contact/tel	Ian O'Riordan, Manager, City Art Centre, 529 3955 ian.oriordan@edinburgh.gov.uk
Wards affected	City Wide
Background Papers	The Jean F Watson Bequest files are held at the City Art Centre