

Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

10am, Friday 30 November 2018

Purchase of a suite of photographs by David Eustace

Item number	5.2
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	
Council Commitments	46

Executive Summary

Committee is asked to approve the purchase of a suite of photographs by David Eustace (b.1961) – a portrait of actor Robbie Coltrane from 1993, a portrait of Michael, a model, from 2003, a photograph of the artist's daughter from 2009 and a portfolio of photographs entitled *Mar a Bha* from 2018.

Purchase of a suite of photographs by David Eustace

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the purchase of a suite of photographs by David Eustace (b.1961) – a portrait of actor Robbie Coltrane from 1993, a portrait of Michael, a model, from 2003, a photograph of the artist's daughter from 2009 and a portfolio of photographs entitled *Mar a Bha* from 2018.

2. Background

- 2.1 The City Art Centre's fine art collection traces the development of Scottish art from the 17th century until present day. Acquisitions of new work by established contemporary artists are an important part of ensuring that the collection continues to provide a comprehensive overview of Scottish art for future generations.
- 2.2 Earlier this year the City Art Centre mounted the exhibition *In Focus: Scottish Photography* (7 July 2018 – 12 May 2019), as a means of showcasing the photographic highlights of the fine art collection. In order to consolidate the long-term impact of this exhibition, and create a tangible legacy, it is proposed that new photographic works by contemporary photographers should be considered for acquisition.

3. Main report

- 3.1 The following suite of photographs by David Eustace are presented to the Committee for consideration:



Robbie Coltrane, London, 1993. Archival pigment print, 103 x 87cm framed.



Michael, Glasgow, 2003. Archival pigment print, 133 x 110cms framed.



Portrait of Rachael, Amarillo, 2009. Archival pigment print, 110 x 84cms



Image from *Mar a Bha, 2018. Archival pigment print limited edition box set portfolio*

- 3.2 David Eustace was born in Edinburgh on the 23 November 1961. Two days later he was adopted by James and Susan Eustace and brought up in 43 Greenside Street in the East End of Glasgow. His father worked as a draftsman for a shipping yard on the Clyde before being made redundant in the 1970's. The East End was historically a tough, working-class environment; often plagued by poverty, poor health, and tensions often leading to violence. However, at the same time, it was a place of tight social bonds, lifelong friendships and incredible humour.
- 3.3 From 1979 – 1983, David joined the Royal Navy Reserve and was assigned to HMS Hodgston (M1146). In 1983, he joined HMP Barlinnie and served as a Prison Officer for five years. He was working at the prison when the infamous Barlinnie riots took place in 1987. In 1984 he picked up his first camera, and was immediately fascinated with the medium. In 1987 David sought advice from the staff at the Glasgow College of Building and Printing with regards to studying photography. Impressed with his portfolio, they encouraged David to apply for the degree course at Napier University in Edinburgh. He was immediately accepted as a mature student. Among his teachers was Robin Gillanders, whose photographs the Committee are also considering at this meeting.
- 3.4 David graduated from Edinburgh Napier University with distinction. In his final year, he contacted the eminent Scots born photographer Albert Watson in New York and worked as his assistant for a week. Within months of leaving University he was already working for GQ and ES magazines, fulfilling four covers for GQ by the end of the following year. Portrait commissions came in thick and fast. David had an ability to connect with his subjects and the resulting images surprised the publishing world, which in turn, led to more work.
- 3.5 Since these early days, David has worked all over the world for some of the leading global brands. In 2007 a fire at his home in Glasgow destroyed many of his early portraits and negatives. The following year, he was one of 11 photographers chosen to capture the character of America for USA Network / NBC Universal. The project was launched in New York in March 2009 and toured to a further five US cities ending in Los Angeles. More images were chosen from David's final portfolio than anyone else, and one was selected for the cover of the accompanying publication. David won 'Communicator of the Year' award at the Scottish Fashion Awards that same year.
- 3.6 David can count among his sitters some of the best loved stars of stage and screen, including Sophia Loren, Dame Judi Dench, Ewan McGregor, Sir John Hurt, Stephen Fry, Sir Paul McCartney as well as artists Tracey Emin and Sir Peter Blake. In 2011, David was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Arts from Edinburgh Napier University, and in 2015 became the University Chancellor. That same year, he had his first major solo exhibition at the Scottish Gallery entitled '*Selected Works*'.

- 3.7 David Eustace, although an internationally recognized photographer, is not presently represented in the City's collection. In conjunction with his dealers The Scottish Gallery, and with the full support of the artist, we would like to rectify this omission by bringing a selection of images to the Committee which span 25 years of his work, and which explore different facets of his practice.
- 3.8 From 1993, we have a portrait of actor Robbie Coltrane. This photograph has particular significance for David, for it was featured in the GQ magazine where David shot the front cover for the first time. It has since become one of David's most well-known photographs. It was made in an edition of seven, of which only two remain unsold.
- 3.9 From 2003 comes the haunting portrait of Michael. A model at the time, David chose to focus on Michael's flawless appearance and penetrating stare. There is nothing in the photograph that is allowed to distract the viewer, who is immediately drawn to Michael's gaze. It is an image which is both timeless and unforgettable.
- 3.10 In 2009 David embarked on a journey across America with his 16 year old daughter, Rachael, focusing on a father and daughter's relationship. They drove over 3000 miles from Los Angeles to the small town south of Dallas, Texas called Eustace. *In Search of Eustace* was exhibited in both the UK and the US. Grant Scott, then editor of Professional Photographer, described the body of work as 'genius'. The photographs produced for that series are not normally for sale, but David has kindly made them available to us, for he would like them to enter a public, rather than a private, collection. Should the Committee chose to approve the purchase of one of these portraits, David has kindly agreed to donate a second.
- 3.11 Finally, there is '*Mar a Bha*'. Meaning 'As it was' in English, this portfolio of work is the product of 20 years of visiting the Isle of Harris on Scotland's west coast. For David, Harris is a place where time has stood still, as the season turns immutably; an island facing the vastness of the Atlantic Ocean. Guy Peplow, Director of the Scottish Gallery wrote about this series: "*The artist's response was to use slower shutter speeds, the longer exposures symbolic of a pause, and inward breath to allow the experience to persist and lending a grainy truth and mineral sparkle to the rocks and sand*". For David, *Mar a Bha* represents a turning point, a seminal work in his career.
- 3.12 The City Art Centre does not yet own any examples of work by this important Edinburgh based photographer, and we would like to rectify this significant omission. The photographs are being offered for sale by the artist through his representatives The Scottish Gallery. The prices include a significant museum discount.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 Completed purchase of a suite of photographs by David Eustace (b.1961) – a portrait of actor Robbie Coltrane from 1993, a portrait of Michael, a model, from 2003, a photograph of the artist’s daughter from 2009 and a portfolio of photographs entitled *Mar a Bha* from 2018.

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 The costs are as follows:
- 5.1.1 *Robbie Coltrane*, London, 1993: £6,000 framed;
 - 5.1.2 *Michael*, Glasgow, 2003: £2,300 framed;
 - 5.1.3 *Portrait of Rachael, Antelope Canyon*, 2009: £3,600 framed; and
 - 5.1.4 ‘*Mar a Bha*’, portfolio box set, limited edition of 18 photographs: £15,000.
- 5.2 Funds for these purchases will come from the Jean F Watson Bequest, and it is intended that an application for grant aid will be submitted to the National Fund for Acquisitions.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 Not applicable.

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 Not applicable.

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 Not applicable.

10. Background reading/external references

- 10.1 David Eustace website: <https://www.davideustace.com/>
- 10.2 BBC TV article: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-32392801>
- 10.3 Scottish Gallery: https://scottish-gallery.co.uk/artist/david_eustace

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11. Appendices

None.