

Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

10am, Friday 30 November 2018

Purchase of a silver beaker by William Kirk

Item number	5.9
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	
Council Commitments	46

Executive Summary

Committee is asked to approve the purchase of a hammer raised silver beaker with millennium mark by William Kirk (1933-2009).

Purchase of a silver beaker by William Kirk

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the purchase of a silver beaker by William Kirk.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Museum of Edinburgh has a fine collection of 18th and 19th century silver, made in Edinburgh and Canongate which is recognised as of National Significance by Museums Galleries Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government, but there are few pieces from the late 20th century and present day. Acquisitions of new work by contemporary silversmiths are an important part of ensuring that the collection continues to display work made in Edinburgh and its environs as part of a wider remit to collect contemporary applied art made in the city and East of Scotland and to ensure our collections remain relevant to future generations.

3 Main report

- 3.1 The following item by William Kirk is presented to the Committee for consideration:

William Kirk

Hammer Raised Silver Beaker with Millennium Mark, 2000

Silver

H65mm x W65mm

£1,480 (including 10% Museum discount)



- 3.2 Born in 1933, William Kirk was workshop trained in Edinburgh before establishing his own studio in 1961. As a tutor of silversmithing, firstly at Glasgow School of Art (1961-1978) and then at Edinburgh College of Art (1980-1999), Kirk has been a significant influence on the nurturing and development of fine silversmithing skills in Scotland.
- 3.3 William Kirk was a silversmith who really understood the nature of the medium. His later work is elegantly simple, displaying his complete mastery of techniques such as hand raising are in the tradition of the master Scottish Silversmiths of the 17th century, yet are also obviously modern pieces.
- 3.4 This beautiful piece is indicative of Kirks work. Deceptive in its simplicity it is based on form, shape, proportion and surface. A hammer raised piece, it retains the hammer marks on its planished surface as part of its design.
- 3.5 The piece also is marked with the Millennium mark. We have no other pieces which so visibly represent the Millennium within our applied art collections.
- 3.6 The piece is in overall good condition, but there is a long scratch on its upper surface. However, this does not overly detract from the finished piece and its Millennium mark and fact that it is an otherwise excellent representation of Kirk's work mean that it remains an important piece to consider for our collections.
- 3.7 Public Collections displaying the work of William Kirk include - Aberdeen Art Gallery and Museum, National Museums Scotland, University of Edinburgh, Napier University, Stirling University and Bute House Collection. Following his death in 2009 a retrospective exhibition *William Kirk, Towards Perfection* as held at the Scottish Gallery, Edinburgh in 2011.
- 3.8 There are two pieces by William Kirk in our collections which are both on display at the Museum of Edinburgh. A silver rose bowl dated 2000 on a slate plinth engraved with words from a poem by W B Yeats was commissioned by the Friends of the City Art Centre and Museums to mark their 25th anniversary. A rose bowl in silver with gilded sections made in 1973 is engraved with armorials and mottos for each of the four Burghs which together form the City of Edinburgh. This piece with its Millennium mark will provide a welcome addition to our collections and will further represent the range of his work during a long career.
- 3.9 The beaker is being purchased as part of a wider initiative to collect more contemporary material for our applied art collections of silver, glass and East Coast Ceramics. The beaker will be displayed in the Silver Gallery at the Museum of Edinburgh

4 Measures of success

- 4.1 Completed purchase of silver beaker with millennium mark by William Kirk.

5 Financial impact

- 5.1 The piece is being purchased from the Scottish Gallery Edinburgh. The full cost of the piece is £1,650. The gallery is offering a 10% museum discount which reduces the price to £1,480.
- 5.2 Funds for this purchase will come from the Jean F Watson Bequest, and it is intended that an application for grant aid will be 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

None.

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

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11 Appendices

None.