

Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

10.00am, Friday 7 February, 2020

Purchase of three paintings by Eric Cruikshank

Executive/routine

Wards

Council Commitments [46](#)

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the purchase of three untitled paintings by Edinburgh based artist Eric Cruikshank (b.1975).

Paul Lawrence

Executive Director of Place

Contact: David Patterson, Curatorial and Conservation Manager

E-mail: david.patterson@edinburgh.gov.uk | Tel: 0131 529 3955

Report

Purchase of three paintings by Eric Cruikshank

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 Committee is asked to approve the purchase of three untitled paintings by Eric Cruikshank (b.1975).

3. Background

- 3.1 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 emerging contemporary artists are an important part of ensuring that the collection continues to provide a comprehensive overview of Scottish art for future generations.
- 3.2 The three paintings under consideration are part of a current exhibition at the City Art Centre. *Beneath the Surface* features work by nine contemporary artists based in Scotland. Each of them articulates a minimalist aesthetic through abstraction in their work. Eschewing narrative and observed reality, the artworks have an economy of gesture in common – a limited tonal palette or a monochrome colour plane.

4. Main report

- 4.1 The following paintings by Eric Cruikshank are presented to the Committee for consideration:

4.1.1 Untitled 1, oil on paper, 2019, 49 x 42cms (framed)



4.1.2 Untitled 2, oil on paper, 2019, 49 x 42cms (framed)



4.1.3 Untitled 3, oil on paper, 2019, 49 x 42cms (framed)



- 4.2 Eric Cruikshank was born outside Inverness and studied at Edinburgh College of Art from 1993 to 1997. He grew up on his family farm, where working alongside his father he became acutely aware of the effects that the weather and the seasons had on the daily routine. It also engendered a love of the highland landscape, particularly the expansive, luminous skies, which have been a primary influence on his work ever since.
- 4.3 The artist acknowledges that while the landscape is the starting point for his work, his paintings are not about the literal presentation of this landscape, instead colour alone acts as the means to reveal the pictures' underlying point of reference. The works are deeply personal interpretations, so he is aware they reflect how he has responded to this landscape, his memories of a time and a place.
- 4.4 His paintings reveal meticulous colour gradients. In a recent interview, he disclosed more about his working practice: *“My painting process is a long one, defined as much by the removal as it is by the addition of paint. Firstly, I measure and mix enough colour required for one complete layer, then marking out the shapes on the panel where the different tones will be applied, quickly block them in. This initial application of paint is fast and quite rough, and I work like this until the surface has a complete uniform layer. Then I methodically and systematically work the surface in alternating horizontal then vertical sweeps with the now almost dry brush. The paint begins to lift off the surface, blending the tonal blocks at the same time. After each directional sweep, the brush is wiped, and the process begins again. This can take many hours of continually working the surface and then wiping the brush, until the plane has a delicate thin skim of paint remaining, a veil of paint, that allows light to penetrate, hinting at something underneath. The panel is then left for two weeks so the oil has time to dry, then the entire process is repeated, building up a uniform surface of many layers of ultra-thin paint. This needs to be done anywhere between*

6-10 times, meaning the paintings can take anywhere between 4-7 months to complete, factoring in all the different stages”.

- 4.5 The results are works which have a flawless appearance and in which light permeates through the multiple layers. They are reminiscent of early morning skies, or of dusk when the setting sun throws up a range of hues. They are works which reveal more the longer they are looked at – infinitely delicate gradations of colour, subtle shifts of tone.
- 4.6 Eric Cruikshank is not represented in the City’s art collection. He has exhibited within Scotland but also internationally, most recently in Dallas, Texas, but also within the past ten years in Gothenburg, Japan, Berlin, Basel, Santa Fe and Paris. As with fellow artist Eric Lumsden, whose work the panel is considering at this meeting, the City Council awarded him a small visual arts grant in 2014 to help him further his career.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 If the Committee approve the purchase of the three paintings, it is intended that an application for grant aid will be submitted to the National Fund for Acquisitions, administered on behalf of the Scottish Government by the National Museums of Scotland.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 The costs are as follows:
- 6.1.1 *Untitled 1, 2 and 3* are unique art works and are offered for sale by the artist for the total price of £3,960. This represents a museum discount of 25% compared on the normal asking price.

7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

- 7.1 Not Applicable

8. Background reading/external references

- 8.1 Eric Cruikshank’s web site: <http://www.ericcruikshank.com/index.htm>
- 8.2 Interview with the artist:
https://www.hollyjohnsongallery.com/artist/Eric_Cruikshank/news/358/
- 8.3 [National Funds for Acquisition information](#)

9. Appendices

Not applicable.