

# Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest

10.00am, Friday, 7 February 2020

## Purchase of a painting by Michael Craik

Executive/routine

Wards

Council Commitments [46](#)

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 It is recommended that the Committee approves the purchase of the 2019 painting *Vestige 2019\_45* by Michael Craik (b. 1972).

**Paul Lawrence**

Executive Director of Place

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# Report

## Purchase of a painting by Michael Craik

### 2. Executive Summary

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- 2.1 Committee is asked to approve the purchase of the 2019 painting *Vestige 2019\_45* by Michael Craik (b. 1972).

### 3. Background

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- 3.1 The City Art Centre's fine art collection traces the development of Scottish art from the 17<sup>th</sup> 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 painting under consideration is 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

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- 4.1 The following painting by Michael Craik is presented to the Committee for consideration:

4.1.1 *Vestige 2019\_45*

acrylic on aluminium, 2019

50 x 50cm

£1,500.00



- 4.2 Michael Craik was born in Edinburgh in 1972. He studied Fine Art at Gray's School of Art in Aberdeen between 1992 and 1996, before undertaking a Masters in European Fine Art in Barcelona in 1999. He is currently based in Fife with a studio in the coastal town of Kinghorn.
- 4.3 Craik's work is concerned with colour, material quality and process. He produces acrylic paintings on both aluminium and wooden panels, and also works in the medium of watercolour on paper. His works are quiet and contemplative, the result of the artist's methodical investigations into colour and repetition. They take the form of tonal colour fields, energised at the edges by outlines of alternating hues.
- 4.4 Although Craik's paintings are minimalist in appearance, they are technically complex and labour-intensive. His approach involves repeatedly applying layers of pigment to the surface of the work and removing them again, gradually enabling an overall form to emerge and evolve. As he explains: "For each work, I slowly build up layers of colour by brushing, spreading and pouring paint – often a combination of all three. In between layers I sand back the surface and over time this exposes previously painted layers of alternating colour around the edges of the painting." This time-consuming process takes place over a period of weeks or even months.
- 4.5 Repetition is an important aspect of Craik's practice, which he describes as an almost meditative process. The sense of gradual progression through repetition over the passage of time bears a connection to geological phenomena, in terms of the deposition and erosion of rock. Craik's studio in Kinghorn is sited on a clifftop overlooking the River Forth estuary. Surrounded by water and acutely aware of the environmental forces that shape the nearby landforms, the experience of working in this location feeds into his creative practice.
- 4.6 Over the last 20 years, Craik has exhibited widely, both within the UK and internationally. He has been included in numerous group exhibitions and has staged solo and joint shows in locations such as Berlin, Milan, Gothenburg and Kyoto. He

has received multiple awards from bodies including Creative Scotland, Fife Contemporary Art and Craft and the Hope Scott Trust. His work can be found in private and public collections, including the Collins Gallery (Strathclyde University), the Fleming Collection, Grampian Hospitals Art Trust and the Royal Bank of Scotland.

- 4.7 *Vestige 2019\_45* is a strong example of Craik's work that represents his current practice in terms of style and process. The City Art Centre does not yet own any artworks by this artist, and it is felt that the staging of the current exhibition *Beneath the Surface* provides a good opportunity to rectify this. The painting would complement our existing holdings of works by artists like Calum Innes and Kenneth Dingwall, as well as complementing the works by Eric Cruikshank and James Lumsden which are also being proposed for acquisition at this meeting. *Vestige 2019\_45* is being offered directly for sale by the artist.

## 5. Next Steps

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- 5.1 If acquisition of this artwork is approved, 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

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- 6.1 *Vestige 2019\_45* is being offered for sale at a price of £1,500. This represents a museum discount of around 16% compared on the normal sale price. Funds for this purchase 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.

## 7. Stakeholder/Community Impact

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- 7.1 Not applicable.

## 8. Background reading/external references

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- 8.1 More information on Michael Craik can be found on his website: [www.michaelcraik.com](http://www.michaelcraik.com)
- 8.2 Craik is represented by &Gallery in Edinburgh <http://www.andgallery.co.uk/product-category/visual-artists/michael-craik/>
- 8.3 [National Funds for Acquisition information](#)

## 9. Appendices

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9.1 None.