

The City of Edinburgh Council

10.00am, Thursday, 29 August 2024

City Art Centre Display of Jean F. Watson Bust

Executive/routine
Wards

All

1. Recommendations

- 1.1 To note this update on plans to display of the bust of Jean F. Watson at City Art Centre in time for the launch of the autumn/ winter 2024 programme of exhibitions.

Joan Parr

Service Director, Culture and Wellbeing

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City Art Centre Display of Jean F. Watson Bust

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 On 23 February 2024, the Committee of the Jean F Watson Bequest requested that the bust of Jean F Watson be displayed on a permanent basis at the City Art Centre, in order to recognise her important contribution to visual arts and culture in the city.
- 2.2 The request was [approved](#) by the Council on 9 May 2024 and this report summarises the delivery plan that has been developed by the Museums and Galleries Service.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Jean F. Watson Bequest was established in the 1960s by the Edinburgh resident Jean Fletcher Watson (1877-1974). This financial gift was presented to the City of Edinburgh as a series of donations over several years, intended for the purpose of building a collection of Scottish art. It remains the city's principal source of funding for the acquisition of artworks.
- 3.2 To date, over 1,000 artworks have been purchased using the Bequest, including key works by Allan Ramsay, John Lavery, J.D. Fergusson, William Gillies, Wilhelmina Barns-Graham, Eduardo Paolozzi, Joan Eardley, John Bellany, Victoria Crowe and Maud Sulter.
- 3.3 To acknowledge Watson's significant personal role in the development of the collection, the city commissioned the sculptor Eric Schilsky to produce a portrait bust of her. Schilsky was a prominent artist who served as Head of the School of Sculpture at Edinburgh College of Art between 1945 and 1969. His bronze bust of Watson was exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy in 1963.
- 3.4 The bust remains part of the city's Fine Art collection, which is Recognised by Scottish Government as nationally important, and to date has been displayed on a rotational basis in line with the temporary exhibitions programme at the City Art Centre.
- 3.5 On 9 May 2024, the Council approved a motion by Councillor Rae which requested that, in order to recognise the deep debt of gratitude owed by the city to Ms Jean F

Watson, her vision, and her ambition for the artistic and cultural life of the city, that a report be prepared in two cycles identifying a permanent home within the City Art Centre to site her bust and to tell her inspiring story.

4. Main report

- 4.1 A permanent location within the City Art Centre to site the Jean F Watson bust and story has been identified on the ground floor to ensure high visibility and complement the visitor journey. This will be presented on a suitable plinth to support and protect the sculpture.
- 4.2 The interpretation panel will celebrate her impact, as well as encourage future philanthropic giving and donations.
- 4.3 Due to the changing nature and design of the exhibitions in the City Art Centre there may, from time to time, be reasons to move the sculpture to an alternative location on the ground floor but it will remain a permanent feature in this space.
- 4.4 Officers are currently progressing the following actions to display the bust and story in time for the autumn/winter programme launch in November 2024:
 - 4.4.1 Assess display and conservation requirements of bust;
 - 4.4.2 Commission plinth and Perspex lid;
 - 4.4.3 Prepare accompanying interpretation text;
 - 4.4.4 Design and produce accompanying graphics as required; and
 - 4.4.5 Install bust and interpretation in situ.

5. Next Steps

- 5.1 The actions outlined in paragraph 4.4 are now being progressed for the bust to be installed in time for the launch of the autumn/winter 2024 programme of exhibitions at the City Art Centre, which opens to the public on Saturday 9 November 2024.

6. Financial impact

- 6.1 All costs can be contained within the 2024/25 revenue budget held by the Culture and Wellbeing service.

7. Equality and Poverty Impact

- 7.1 Not applicable.

8. Climate and Nature Emergency Implications

8.1 Not applicable.

9. Risk, policy, compliance, governance and community impact

9.1 The Committee on the Jean F Watson Bequest consists of eight Councillors and is appointed by the City of Edinburgh Council.

10. Background reading/external references

10.1 Jean F. Watson Bequest Committee, [23 February 2024](#)

11. Appendices

None.