

# Council to buy pandemic inspired artworks

The City of Edinburgh Council will discuss on Friday the opportunity of purchasing artworks inspired by the pandemic for the City Arts Centre's collection. The works include 36 social distancing floor vinyls which were "displayed" at the Western General.

Members of the Jean F Watson Bequest Committee, which acquires contemporary Scottish art for Edinburgh's museums and galleries, will meet on Friday to approve the purchase of the six new pieces worth a total £14,000.

Completed during the first lockdown last year, the collection – which consists of paintings, sculptural installations and photographs – was previously displayed as part of the *Life Under Lockdown* exhibition.

Launched by Tonic Arts, an award-winning arts programme set up by Edinburgh and Lothians Health Foundation, the exhibition sought "seven visual artists across seven generations who could creatively capture living through the Covid-19 pandemic lockdown from their personal and generational perspectives".

Now, curators at the City Art Centre want to purchase the artworks to collect "artistic responses to the current global pandemic" to reflect the unprecedented times of the past 19

months.



One of the works, “Walk of Faith” by Dundee-based artist David McCulloch, is made up of 36 floor vinyls showing the artist’s feet standing next to social distancing signage which appeared in shops, hospitals and on streets during the pandemic.

For *Life Under Lockdown*, David’s vinyls went “on display” along corridors in the Western General Hospital this summer.

David said: “Physically my signs mimic the common “2m social distance” visual signage that we now see in every building we enter. Each of my signs was a photograph taken from above showing my feet next to the shop floor signs that I encountered.

“Collectively, they form a narrative revealing my cautious entry back into society after lockdown. Each vinyl includes the date of when the photograph was taken. This indicates both the nature of my activity and my personal timeline of

adjustment after an intense period of lockdown.

“The title Walk of Faith indicates both a physical and emotional encounter. Physically, it felt like every step taken when entering a shop or building could potentially be my last. Emotionally my trust was tested based on how much I believed the instruction on the sign would keep me safe.”

The committee may agree to pay £4,000 for the 36 floor vinyls plus final digital artwork.



Walk of Faith

Also considered for the City Arts Centre's collection is part of the "Study for a Kiss" installation by Virginia Hutchison

from Paisley.

Her series of copper sculptures were inspired by ideas around the sense of touch, and the fact that “opportunities for human contact during lockdown were much reduced” a report to the committee states.

It adds: “Hutchison made several short films that explore the gestures involved in sending a kiss, slowing down the footage and examining each individual bodily movement.

“From this starting point, she developed a sequence of line drawings, for which she drew around her own hands and replicated their forms in overlapping patterns to articulate the gestural action. These designs were then hand-engraved onto copper plates, creating the finished sculptural pieces.”

It is proposed that the City Art Centre should acquire “Study for a Kiss#5”, one of the larger sets made up of three pairs, for £2,100.

Other pieces being put forward for purchase include two paintings by Ayrshire artist Olivia Irvine, a photographic portfolio by Norman McBeath, also from Ayrshire, and a painting unrelated to the Covid-19 collection by Donald Smith from Lewis, who died in 2014.

*by Donald Turvill Local Democracy Reporter*

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Study for a Kiss