

SPEAKER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WORKS OF ART**Note of the meeting held on 18 May 2021 at 4.30pm [INF01]**

[Virtual meeting]

Members present: Hywel Williams (Chair)
Simon Baynes
Sally-Ann Hart
Kim Johnson
Barbara Keeley
Mr Gagan Mohindra
Caroline Nokes

Apologies: Sarah Champion and Dean Russell

In attendance: Melissa Hamnett, Curator of Works of Art and Head of Heritage Collections
Emma Gormley, Acting Deputy Curator
Lorcan O'Donoghue, Media Officer
Grace Saull, Assistant Curator
Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator

1) Informal Note

The Committee **agreed** the informal notes of the meeting on 23 March 2021.

2) Election Artist update

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, and Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Unwin gave a visual presentation on the proposed artwork.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update and the following annexes in the paper:

- the key to the proposed artwork (Annex A); and
- the roadmap for the commission (Annex B).

3) Works of Art Communications Strategy

Lorcan O'Donoghue, Senior Media Relations Officer, Commons Communications Office, briefed the Committee.

Mr O'Donoghue provided an overview of the Works of Art Communications Strategy for the next six months. While COVID-19 had had a significant impact on Committee activity over the last year, the year ahead presented several opportunities to promote key areas

of work such as the 2019 Election Artist and the continuation of the Review of the Collection.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update and **endorsed** the Communications Strategy.

4) Works of Art Annual Report 2020/21

Sean Harris, Committee Secretariat, briefed the Committee.

Mr Harris provided a summary of the report, which set out the Committee's acquisitions, commissions, displays and loans for the financial year 2020/21 and a statement of account for submission to the Finance Committee. The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had led to a significant number of operational and strategic challenges in the management of the Collection, though the Committee and the Heritage Collections Team oversaw work in the following key areas:

- work to address issues of diversity of representation in the Collection and the ongoing Review of the Collection;
- several key acquisitions, as noted in the paper;
- progressing the Election Artist commission;
- development of a new Heritage Collections website; and
- the day-to-day management of the Collection and incident response throughout the pandemic.

Decision

The Committee:

- **agreed** its annual report for 2020/21 for submission to the Finance Committee and for publication on its website; and
- **noted** the statement of accounts (as at 31 March 2020).

5) Updates, acquisitions, displays, moves and loans

a) Potential acquisition – Portrait of Edwin Montague PC

Emma Gormley, Deputy Curator (acting), briefed the Committee [*The artwork was shown to the Committee during the meeting*].

Ms Gormley noted that the sitter was the third practising Jewish person to join the Cabinet and the artwork was in good condition. Work by the artist, Estelle Nathan, rarely appeared on the market.

The following points were discussed:

- It was recognised that the sitter had taken a progressive view towards Indian self-government in his role as Secretary of State for India and that this would be reflected in any interpretative materials.
- A Member asked if the sitter was on the Hinchingsbrooke list and noted that acquiring the portrait would do little to diversify representation in the Collection, given that the sitter was white and male. Ms Gormley said that he was not on the list.
- Melanie Unwin (Deputy Curator, in attendance) said that the Jewish Museum supported the acquisition of the artwork by a public collection such as the Parliamentary Art Collection.
- The Chair and several Members supported the acquisition.

Decision

The Committee **agreed** to purchase the portrait of Edwin Montagu by Estelle Nathan for £350.

b) Heritage Collections Online Services (website update)

Grace Saull, Assistant Curator, briefed the Committee.

Ms Saull reported that since the last update the website had been built and now contained data and content, though there were some ongoing fixes. She then gave an onscreen demonstration of the website. A soft launch had been agreed with the Parliamentary Digital Service so that there was room to make changes and fixes to the website after it had gone live as well as to gather feedback from users to improve their experience. Work would be undertaken with the Committee's Media Officer to publicise the website more widely during the second stage of the go-live phase.

The Chair asked when the website was likely to be finished. Ms Saull said that it was hoped that phase two would be completed by the beginning of June, and phase three (research and development) by the end of September.

The Chair and several Members commended the design and functionality of the new website.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

c) Collections care update

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, briefed the Committee.

Ms Hamnett reported that in Norman Shaw North a major audit, inspection and location control of items in the Collection had been carried out ahead of the planned decant of the building as part of the refurbishment of the building. During the Easter Recess, 335 objects and 268 areas had been audited and further work was planned to carry out conservation work where necessary and to relocate items.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

6) Any other business

Financial statement (as at 30 April February)

The Committee **noted** the financial statement.

Heritage Collections monthly highlights reports

The Committee **noted** the highlights report for March and April.

7) Date and time of the next meeting

The Committee will next meet on **Tuesday 15 June at 4.30pm.**