

SPEAKER'S ADVISORY COMMITTEE ON WORKS OF ART

Note of the meeting held on 15 June 2021 at 4.30pm [INF02]

[Virtual meeting]

Members present: Hywel Williams (Chair)
Sally-Ann Hart
Caroline Nokes

Apologies: Simon Baynes, Sarah Champion, Kim Johnson, Barbara Keeley,
Gagan Mohindra 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 note of the meeting on 18 May 2021.

2) Election Artist commission

Melissa Hamnett, Head of Heritage Collections and Curator of Works of Art, and Nicky Hirst, Election Artist 2019, showed the Committee the first in a series of films on the Election Artist commission.

The Chair and several Members welcomed the opportunity to discuss the progress of the commission with Ms Hirst.

The Chair sought confirmation that Ms Hirst had also visited Scotland, Wales and North Ireland while undertaking research for the commission. Ms Hirst confirmed she had and said that she had followed the campaign trail using public transport and visiting as many regions of the UK as possible.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

3) Financial statement

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

Ms Hamnett reported that the financial statement had been updated to reflect the recent acquisition of the portrait of Edward Montague by Estelle Nathan for £350.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the financial statement.

4) Diversity commission

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

Ms Hamnett invited the Committee to approve a briefing note for submission to Mr Speaker to inform him of the Committee's proposals to increase diversity of representation in the Collection and to commission a significant artwork for the Collection. The briefing paper sought his guidance and support given his interest in the work of the Committee. The paper highlighted several key considerations such as the importance of finding a suitable location for the long-term display of the commissioned artwork as well as funding, as it would take several years to complete and was likely to continue across parliaments.

Decision

The Committee **approved** the briefing paper for submission to Mr Speaker.

5) Collections Advisory Group

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

Ms Hamnett said that the services of a recruitment agency with experience in recruiting based on principles of diversity and inclusion were being sought to ensure impartiality, a rigorous process with wide reach and that the desired external experts reflected a broad range of experience. The tender process was underway with three suppliers and would be completed by the beginning of July. It would be followed by the search for external members of the Group which would take around 6 to 8 weeks to shortlist followed by board interviews. Gagan Mohindra MP (Works of Art Committee), and Lord Faulkner (Lord Speaker's Panel on Works of Art) had been nominated to sit on the Group and Baroness Young of Hornsey had accepted the role of Chair.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

6) Updates, acquisitions, displays, moves and loans**a) Print on Demand**

Diana Christou, Head of Retail and Buying, and Adam Woods, E-Commerce and Marketing Manager, In-House Services and Estates, briefed the Committee.

Mr Woods gave a presentation on the first year of the Retail Team's Print on Demand Service. The new service had generated £4,920 of revenue, selling 115 units with views of the Palace proving popular. The hope was now to focus on expanding the range of

images of works from the Collection in collaboration with the Heritage Collections Team, providing international delivery for orders, to provide Print on Demand kiosks and displays in Parliament's shops as well as to consider internal and external marketing opportunities.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

b) June Mendoza gift

Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator (jobshare), briefed the Committee.

Ms Unwin gave a visual presentation following an offer of a gift of archival material from the artist June Mendoza relating to her commission 'The House of Commons in Session 1986' (WOA 3232).

The Chair asked where the material would be stored if it was accepted. Ms Unwin said that it would either be accessioned to the Parliamentary Archives and made available in their search room or stored among the papers held by the Curator's Office with access granted on request.

Decision

The Committee **agreed** to accept the gift, subject to inspection of the material by the curators.

c) Estates and maintenance projects affecting works of art

Melanie Unwin, Deputy Curator (jobshare), briefed the Committee.

Ms Unwin provided an update on two major estates and maintenance projects affecting works of art in Central Lobby and the Terrace Cafeteria during the summer. Busts in Members' Lobby had been boxed and wall paintings in the Members' Corridor had been covered for their protection during upgrade works to the doors in Central Lobby. Vibration monitoring was being carried out at the same time by the Heritage Collections Team to gain information on the impact of works on fixed artworks such as wall paintings. The paintings on display in the Terrace Cafeteria would be taken down during summer refurbishment work there that would also allow for a refresh of the pictures on display. Additionally, the decant of Norman Shaw North was due to start in the coming months and this would require the removal of the artworks on display in that building.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

d) Collections care update

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

Ms Hamnett reported that the liquid moisture survey conducted in the Chapel of St Mary Undercroft before Christmas had found no evidence of water infiltration in the stonework. The survey was carried out after wall-painted scenes of the Chapel's interior and vaulting were found to be flaking and water ingress was feared to be the cause. Despite no proof of water infiltration, there were further considerations to be had as to how the Chapel environment and humidity was to be monitored to ensure its long-term preservation. The Heritage Collections Team would be working closely with Black Rod's Office and the Principal Conservation Architect on conservation works planned for the summer recess in 2022.

Decision

The Committee **noted** the update.

7) Any other business

Heritage Collections monthly highlights reports

The Committee **noted** the highlights report for May.

8) Date and time of the next meeting

The Committee will next meet on **Tuesday 13 July at 4.30pm.**