

Nottingham City Council Delegated Decision



Nottingham
City Council

Reference Number:

3826

Author:

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Department:

Commercial and Operations

Contact:

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Subject:

Purchase of 'Make tofu not war' tapestry artwork

Total Value:

Exempt (Type: Revenue)

Decision Being Taken:

- 1) To accept funding from Art Fund, the ACE/V&A Purchase Grant fund, Contemporary Art Society and donations.**
- 2) To use this funding to purchase a contemporary work of art (tapestry) for the collection of Nottingham City Museums, including its specialist delivery from New York to Nottingham.**
- 3) To grant dispensation from Financial Regulations with regard to Contract Procedure Rules in respect of the purchase.**

Reasons for the Decision(s)

This project is to acquire a high-impact contemporary art work by an international woman artist, to be displayed as part of Nottingham Castle's re-launch programme. The art work, a 2.93 x 4.47 metre tapestry, will provide a link between the historical stories of the Castle's rebellious past in one part of the building and the displays of the Fine and Decorative Arts collections in another part.

The tapestry was created by Goshka Macuga and includes a 3D photographic effect. Called 'Make Tofu Not War', it refers to: protest; ideas about democracy, including references to George Orwell's 'Animal Farm'; scientific progress and the 1950s 'sci-fi' idea of a future in which we would all be wearing 3-D spectacles; hunting, environmental issues and the exploitation of the natural world.

Tapestries also feature in archive accounts of Nottingham Castle before its conversion to a Museum in the 19th century and the Museum's collection includes fragments of a tapestry known to have hung there until 1831.

The themes in the work offer great potential for engaging with groups of young people, informal adult learner groups and special interest groups.

The tapestry was identified following three months' research in to international contemporary artists whose work relates to activist and protest themes. This was done with the support of the Contemporary Art Society, through their Collections Fund at Frieze Prize, which was awarded to Nottingham City Museums in 2019.

The Prize required us to research and shortlist artists whose work fitted the protest theme and would be shown at Frieze Art Fair in London in 2019. With the advice of the Contemporary Art Society's panel of 10 experts, we considered art by 58 artists before the final selection was made. The tapestry came to our attention during this process but fell outside the scope of the prize once it was clear that it was not going to be on display at Frieze Art Fair. However, the strength of the work in relation to Nottingham's collection, agreed unanimously by the panel, meant that the Contemporary Art Society agreed to support us in fundraising to purchase it.

Nottingham City Museums has collected contemporary art, the work of living artists, since the Museum opened at Nottingham Castle in 1878. Such art acquisitions shed fresh light on the historical collections and on the history of sites such as the Castle.

This proposed acquisition meets criteria outlined in Nottingham City Museums & Galleries Collections Development Policy 2013. (The Policy is a requirement of the Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom, published by Arts Council England December 2011):

- To collect artists whose work has made an impact on the British art scene since the 1980s. [The artist Goshka Macuga was born in Poland and lives and works in London. She has an international profile and has exhibited in major exhibitions around the world including London, Shanghai, New York, Venice. One of her large-scale sculptures was shown at Nottingham Castle as part of British Art Show 6 in 2006.]
- To collect work by under-represented groups in our society such as women artists and black artists, to address the imbalance in our historical collection and represent more fully the community we serve in line with local authority objectives. [E.g. Research tells us that only 5% of works in our Fine and Decorative Art collections are by women artists, the majority of which were collected after 1980.]
- A particular priority for the current policy is to collect work which explores themes of rebellion, protest and civil rights' across all the collection disciplines. [The Rebellion theme plays a significant role in the new displays and interpretation that are part of Nottingham Castle's £30 million Transformation Programme.]

Other Options Considered: Not to accept the grant and proceed with acquiring the art work - REJECTED as the acquisition relates strongly to one of the key themes of the Nottingham Castle Transformation project and the funding has been secured on the basis that the artwork will be shown as part of the Castle's re-opening displays.

Background Papers: None.

Published Works: None.

Affected Wards: Citywide

Colleague / Councillor Interests: None

Any Information Exempt from publication: Yes

Dispensation from Financial Regulations: Yes

Exempt Information:

Description of what is exempt: Financial information

An appendix (or appendices) to this decision is exempt from publication under the following paragraph(s) of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972

3 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

The public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information because it could prejudice negotiations with the commercial gallery selling the artwork (funding applications were predicated on the negotiation of a discount on the selling price).

Documents exempt from publication:

DDM Confidential Annex Goshka Macuga Tapestry Acquisition Project.docx, Acquisition of Tapestry Artwork DDM finance comments.docx

Consultations:

Those not consulted are not directly affected by the decision.

Crime and Disorder Implications:

None arising from this decision.

Equality:

EIA not required. Reasons: The decision does not relate to changing policies, services and functions.

Decision Type:

Portfolio Holder

Subject to Call In:

Yes

Call In Expiry date:

23/03/2020

Advice Sought:

Legal, Finance, Procurement

Legal Advice:

This report raises no significant legal issues. The City Council must ensure it complies with the terms of any grant funding agreements which will contribute towards the purchase price. The City Council should ensure adequate insurance is put in place to cover transport of the tapestry from New York. The dispensation is supported.

Advice provided by Andrew James (Team Leader Contracts and Commercial) on 13/02/2020.

Finance Advice:

This advice is exempt from publication and is contained within an exempt appendix.

Advice provided by Maria Balchin (Finance Analyst) on 23/02/2020.

Procurement Advice:

There are no procurement issues with this decision. Acquisition of unique artworks is one of the accepted grounds for negotiation without competition under the Public Contracts Regulations, and the appropriate mechanism to comply with the Constitution will be a dispensation to Contract Procedure Rules.

Advice provided by Jonathan Whitmarsh (Lead Procurement Officer) on 07/02/2020.

Signatures

David Trimble (Portfolio Holder for Leisure, Culture and IT)

SIGNED and Dated: 12/03/2020

Andy Vaughan (Corporate Director Commercial and Operations)

SIGNED and Dated: 12/03/2020

Laura Pattman (Strategic Director of Finance) - Dispensation from Financial Regulations
SIGNED and Dated: 12/03/2020
Chief Finance Officer's Comments: