

**FROM:** Mark Doyle (Gallery Curator  
& Collections Manager)

**TO:** Trustees of Handley Bequest Charity

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**REF:** Acquisition of works by Rachael Clewlow, Evangelia  
Spiliopoulou & Rachel Kneebone

**DATE:** 2 March 2018

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### **JAMES HANDLEY BEQUEST**

I wish to make the following request to the James Handley Bequest -

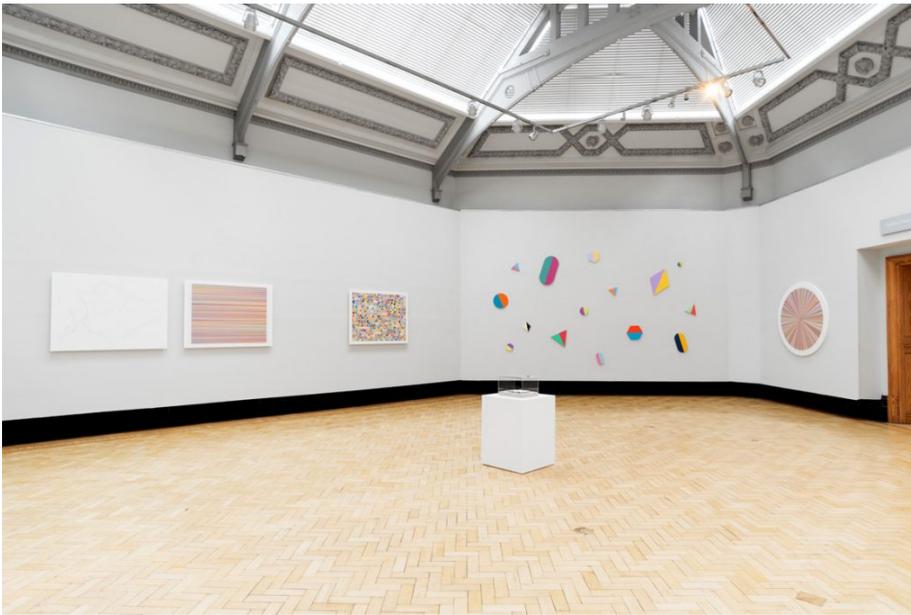
Acquisition of three works for the permanent art collection:

- 1.** *Man-made Waterways, 91.9 Miles Walked, Rochdale (Key II)* (2017) by Rachael Clewlow  
Acrylic paint & silverpoint on board  
122cm x 90cm

#### **Image**



*Man-made Waterways, 91.9 Miles Walked, Rochdale (Key II)*  
(pictured on the left)



*Installation shot of Rachael Clewlow's exhibition in Gallery Three*

**2. Landscape Document #3 (2017) by Evangelia Spiliopoulou**  
Digital print  
33.1" x 48.8"

**Image**



*Landscape Document #3*



*Installation shot of Evangelia Spiliopoulou's exhibition in Gallery One*

**3.** *What is remembered in the body is well remembered* (2018) by Rachel Kneebone  
Porcelain  
26cm x 33cm x 51cm

**Image**



*What is remembered in the body is well remembered (studio photograph)*

## **Background to the artists**

Newcastle-based **Rachael Clewlow** creates rigorous and detailed recordings of her everyday movements. Meticulously documenting this mass of information in diaries, this abstract record of the banal to the unexpected becomes a form of trace from which Clewlow begins to construct paintings and prints.

Manchester-based **Evangelia Spiliopoulou** has developed a practice which seeks to expand the rules that have historically underpinned the act of making an artwork. For example, she frequently employs unconventional tools to obscure the evidence of her own hand in the creative process and chooses to impose strict limitations dictating the development of the final imagery.

London-based **Rachel Kneebone** is known for finely sculpted white porcelain works of various organic forms merging ambiguously into human body-parts. Her work has been described as depicting an "erotic state of flux" and "celebrating forms of transgression, beauty and seduction." She is influenced by ancient Greek and Roman myths in Ovid's poem *Metamorphoses* and the "seductive, mythological paintings" of 18<sup>th</sup> century artist François Boucher.

## **Background to the works we would like to acquire**

*Man-made Waterways, 91.9 Miles Walked, Rochdale (Key II)* was one of a series of new works Rachael Clewlow made for her first institutional solo show at Touchstones Rochdale (*My paths are my ideas of imagination*) from the 21 October to the 16 December 2017.

Inspired by the industrial heritage of the area around Rochdale, Clewlow crossed the Pennine Hills over five days in a walk linking a large network of man-made reservoirs, canals and waterways. She was interested specifically in establishing a new pathway that honours these critical historic monuments to civil engineering at the heart of the area's growth. Meticulously documenting the sights and sounds she observed on her epic walk in a diary, this information became the foundation of a number of abstract paintings including this work.

*Landscape Document #3* is one of a series of new works Evangelia Spiliopoulou made for her first institutional solo show at Touchstones Rochdale (*Orientation: Landscape*) from the 7 October to the 16 December 2017 - Spiliopoulou presented a body of work inspired by the post-industrial landscape of Rochdale and the creative potential of the modern technology many of us now use in our working lives. This work is one of 4 digital prints made entirely with the 'drawing' options of the Microsoft Office Word software (normally deployed for the administrative purposes in the modern workplace) and reproduced using standard office equipment – a Xerox scanner and printer. The finished works have multiple associations from the colour field paintings of Abstract Expressionism to echoes of computers, tablets and phones with their simultaneously open windows and multi-application screens. Furthermore, the colour palette chosen speaks of stone, leather and soot deftly directing us to the architecture and industries of Rochdale and its post-industrial landscape; both "touchstones" for the artist.

*What is remembered in the body is well remembered* is one of a series of new sculptures Rachel Kneebone is making for her forthcoming show at Touchstones Rochdale opening in

October this year. This new body of work will explore the strong sense of the body and movement in Kneebone's practice and the parallels to contemporary dance. As she explains:

*"I am excited at the opportunity to collaborate with Touchstones Rochdale Art Gallery and to work with the two distinct materials and disciplines of porcelain and dance. My aim is to explore what is shared between the two: the overlaps through body and movement; the formal language, speeds, directions, push and pull, stillness and movement, poise and tension with softness and repose; and, how they differ through their materiality. It is said that 'to dance is to exist for but a moment' and as an art form it's harmonious with our temporal life cycle, whilst my sculptures capture and make permanent what is only ever in a state of flux."*

To coincide with her exhibition, Kneebone will also realise a long-held ambition to work with a professional choreographer to develop a new piece of contemporary dance in response to her sculpture. Directed by nationally acclaimed choreographer TC Howard (with the support of partners including White Cube, Royal Exchange Theatre and The Lowry) the performers will be an inter-generational and multi-faith group of women drawn from across our communities. The performance will be premiered on the opening night of Kneebone's show starting in the exhibition and reaching its finale in the Great Hall at Rochdale Town Hall.

### **Context to the proposed acquisitions**

The Art Gallery is currently half-way through an ambitious programme of activity called *Contemporary Forward #2* with the support of external funders such as Arts Council England. The programme has been designed to align closely with our Exhibitions & Acquisitions Policy reflecting our historic and more recent strengths and clearly articulating several key overlapping strands for which we aspire to become nationally recognised. They include:

- **'Women Artists'** – building on our historic strength in collecting and showing work by women artists, showcasing the formal and conceptual concerns of a new generation of female artists, but also responding strategically to the gender imbalance in galleries and public collections of art.
- **'Northern Talent'** – supporting emerging and established artistic talent in the North of England, providing them with the opportunity to create new career-defining work, placing their work in the critical context of nationally and internationally recognised artists, and seeking to bring their work to the attention of curators, collectors, gallerists and commissioners who can further their continued professional development.
- **'Contemporary Craft'** – Exploring innovative contemporary craft, but with a specific focus on artists who are appropriating and re-purposing materials, processes and techniques traditionally associated with craft practices such as ceramics and textiles. This strand resonates with Rochdale's rich industrial heritage linked to objects in our museum collection relating to the cotton, silk and woollen industries.

The exhibitions with Rachael Clewlow, Evangelia Spiliopoulou and Rachel Kneebone are part of this programme and clearly relate to all three key strands outlined above.

## **Why we want to make these acquisitions**

In addition to successfully delivering all the *Contemporary Forward #2* projects, we are also keen to ensure that this important phase in our development has a legacy and is reflected by acquisitions of works for the permanent collection from each of the participating artists.

All three of the artworks for which we would like your support to acquire have been made especially by the artists for their exhibitions at Touchstones Rochdale and are directly inspired by our history, location and communities. The themes (e.g. industry, labour, cooperation, mapping and movement) being addressed by the artists also resonate across our existing rich Fine Art, Museum and Local Studies collections/archives providing huge scope for future display and audience engagement.

The acquisition from Rachel Kneebone will happen before the start of the community dance project outlined above. The development of this project will benefit hugely from the participants being able to easily access Kneebone's work locally and use it as the point of reference and inspiration as they form their creative response.

Finally, it is important to add that both Clewlow and Spiliopoulou are at the very early stages of highly promising careers and to have their work enter a prestigious public collection like Rochdale's would be a major advancement to their future progress – one of the key aims of the strand 'Northern Talent'.

## **Cost**

The retail price of *Man-made Waterways, 91.9 Miles Walked, Rochdale (Key II)* by Rachael Clewlow is £5,500. We have negotiated a special discounted purchase price of £2,000 with the artist.

The retail price of *Landscape Document #3* by Evangelia Spiliopoulou is £960. We have negotiated a special discounted purchase price of £800 with the artist.

The retail price of *What is remembered in the body is well remembered* by Rachel Kneebone is £65,000. We have negotiated a special discounted purchase price of £35,000 with White Cube, the commercial gallery representing Kneebone. A large part of this sum will be covered by existing funding from an Art Fund New Collecting Award (£17,000) and an application made to the V&A Purchase Fund (£15,000). However, the latter expect a contribution (£1 for every £5 they grant) from local sources. As such, we would like to request £3,000 as match.

We would therefore like to request a total of **£5,800** from the James Handley Bequest.

**Mark Doyle, Art Gallery Curator & Collections Manager, Touchstones Rochdale**  
(Link4Life) [mark.doyle@link4life.org](mailto:mark.doyle@link4life.org)