



ARTISTIC EVALUATION

It should be noted the views expressed in this evaluation are intended to represent, as far as possible, an objective aesthetic judgement. Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences.

Artist/Company: Jason Nelson
Venue: The Collective Gallery, Edinburgh
Title of Event: New Work Scotland Programme 2007
Type of Event: Exhibition
Date of Visit: Thursday, 20 December 2007
Overall Rating: 5 - Excellent

(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – i.e. the particular strengths and weaknesses. If the management of the event affects the overall enjoyment of the event, please comment, but the overall rating should be based on the artistic merit of the event.)

This was a worthwhile and excellent event. Jason Nelson proved himself to be a superb storyteller whose artwork expresses many levels of human experience, portrayed through his powerful depiction of childhood life in a former Fife mining community.

Through these imaginative and carefully crafted narratives, visitors to the Show were taken on a journey that was by turns funny and reminiscent or deeply moving and very sad, evocative and revealing. Nelson's skilful use of cartoon drawings, documentary footage and other video techniques, encouraged a strongly emotional response and engagement with highly personal material that under other circumstances, might have been considered private and exclusive.

"Jason Nelson's films offer a glimpse into his memories of growing up in Kelty. The films shown in Gallery 2 include documentary interviews with his friends, drawings of the streets and buildings in his neighbourhood, and narrated animations. Sometimes, a live action Nelson appears in amongst the drawings and photos on screen: he speaks as his younger self, or as the voice in his head, or he plays a character in one of his stories... As the characters recur in different scenarios (both in film and in print), there is something pleasurable in piecing together the locations and the relationships. The view of Nelson's world appears panoramic and complete, though it is actually made up of fragments." (Taken from the Exhibition text, 2007)

Nelson is a highly talented artist whose imagination and ability to draw, create etchings and make video pieces, succeeded in creating stories that had poignancy and relevance, even if the visitor had no prior knowledge of Kelty and its inhabitants.

Name: Rosita McKenzie Date: 23/01/2008

Specialist Advisor

Scottish Arts Council Officer

Please circle the relevant title

This report has been commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council to evaluate the artistic quality of the production named above. It has been prepared by either a specialist Advisor, or an officer of the Scottish Arts Council, as indicated at the end of the form. The report will be circulated to the organisation which produced the work and to the management of the venue, if the venue is core funded by the Scottish Arts Council.

The report will form evidence for the Artistic Leadership and Public Engagement sections of the Quality Framework and be taken into account in assessing the work of the producing company in relation to applications for funding to the Scottish Arts Council. It may also be used by the Joint Board to report on the overall performance of its funded organisations.

Evaluators should enter their rating under each section, explaining briefly their reason for the rating with reference to their comments under each section. Ratings should be given in accordance with the following:

- 1 - Very Poor** – standard falls well below what is acceptable.
- 2 - Poor** – not attaining acceptable standards of conception or presentation.
- 3 - Competent** – routine rather than especially interesting.
- 4 - Good** – well conceived and executed
- 5 - Excellent** – conceived and executed to a high standard.

1. Artistic Assessment

Please evaluate the artistic quality of the event, with particular reference to the strengths and weaknesses of the following:

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p>Vision and imagination of work - Quality of ideas, skills in execution; if you've seen the work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on the comparison.</p>	5	<p>This artist was totally unknown to me before my visit, so I came upon his work with no preconceived ideas.</p> <p>His diverse skills, coupled with his imagination, meant I was instantly drawn into the work and learned a great deal from it in relation to life in Kelty as he and his contributors recall it. Indeed, the work induced a deep sense of connection in me, so that I became very interested in the characters and their stories. This was aided by his use of subtitles to translate the broad local dialect, and the one tactile piece in the Show - his Father's first glass-eye. It represented, I discovered, a harrowing episode e.g. and industrial injury and compensation that led to the family's first real holiday when Nelson was a small boy.</p> <p>Above all, the artwork was about identity and the power of close relationships, set against the grim backdrop of Kelty as a mining town and the intense memories, humorous and tragic that it produced.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.</p> <p>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</p>		<p>This Event was part of the Collective Gallery's New Work Scotland Programme 2007.</p> <p>"The New Work Scotland Programme (NWSP) is a major initiative launched by Collective in 2000. The NWSP identifies and supports, through a policy of open application, some of the most promising new artists working in Scotland - providing them with the opportunity to create new work and bring it to the attention of a wider public. Eligibility is for artists in either their final year (undergraduate or postgraduate) at a Scottish art college or those Scottish based artists who are up to three years out of college. Priority is given to those who have not previously had a major solo show.</p> <p>NWSP lies at the heart of Collective's Professional Development Programme and creates a dedicated three month period for the support and development of new artists in Scotland through both exhibiting, writing and event opportunities." (Taken from the Collective New Work Scotland Programme information leaflet)</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.</p> <p>Education events – see ¹below for guidance</p>		<p>In my opinion, this Event met the aims of the Collective New Work Scotland Programme (See above).</p>

¹ Education is a bridge between artform excellence and increased access and participation, and it is people centred. Providing opportunities for learning and progressing in an artform or using an artform to address other, non-artistic, outcomes are equally valid; in either case a high quality strategic approach is required in order to benefit the participants and the organisation. Delivery can be through workshops, post/pre-show discussions, outreach work, etc aimed at any age group.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p>Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.</p> <p>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.</p>		n/a
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		n/a
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.		n/a
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.		n/a
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.		n/a
Dance, Theatre	Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.		n/a
All	<p>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang</p> <p>Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.</p>		<p>The overall presentation and use of equipment for this Exhibition was excellent.</p> <p>Nonetheless, the lighting for this Exhibition was quite dim because of the nature of the artwork on display. For example, the prints in Gallery 1 were spot lit and in Gallery 2, there was no light at all because the work was projected onto the wall.</p> <p>Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.</p> <p>Jason Nelson gave one Artist's Talk in relation to this Event. The Talk was then followed by a live music performance.</p>
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors' books comments, number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit</p> <p>Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment,</p>		I was aware that there were several visitors at the time of my visit who also spent time listening to the MP3 recording of the Show after viewing the artwork.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	enthusiasm, number involved, etc		
All	<p>Additional Interpretative activity – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.</p>		<p>The Collective received funding from Engage Scotland and subsequently purchased MP3 players in order to provide greater intellectual and physical access to its Shows. The funding is in place for six months and the Nelson Exhibition was the first of three exhibitions that would have this facility during 2007/2008. In this way and after viewing the Exhibition, audiences can listen to audio sound-track whereby earlier visitors who have seen the Show, discuss its merits, strengths and weaknesses.</p>
All	<p>Outcomes of education activity – what learning/skills development took place? What did participants take away with them? Are education resources being provided for follow up work? Is it strategically linked to the curriculum (formal or informal)?</p>		Not known.

2. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and the venue, with reference to the checklist below, including additional comments/observations. Please try to view the venue and the services, and interpretative material as though you had never visited it before eg if you did not know the venue's location, how easy would it be to find your way there, and to find your way around once you had arrived?

Criteria	Comment
Suitability of the venue for the event	This Event was well organised and managed. However, I feel more work is needed in order to attract regular visitors with a wide variety of disabilities. This especially applies to visitors with sensory impairments. The Collective was very suitable for the Event.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Standard and large-print written material is produced for all shows but not braille. MP3 players with audio sound-track have now been introduced. Staff also plan to have MP3 recordings uploaded to their website in 2008, so that these can be made available to audiences as pod casts.
Publicity/ pre-publicity –leaflets, posters, websites, etc. What is produced, is it easy to understand and where can you get the information? Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.	The Collective's website is not particularly accessible at present but this situation is under review. In addition, the Collective sends publicity material to the Listings section of the Good Gallery Guide in order to promote its shows. It also provides a monthly Email newsletter that is widely distributed and which is free and available to anyone. The Collective decided to reduce its print and paper wastage and now everything is Email based.
Ease of booking and payment	As usual, I contacted the venue in advance to arrange assistance during my visit. This went very smoothly. Admission to the Exhibition was free-of-charge.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The Collective is situated in Cockburn Street, Edinburgh. This is in central Edinburgh but the very steep hill and lack of car parking, make it a difficult venue for disabled visitors to patronise. Equally, the nearest bus routes run along the Bridges, a few minutes walk away from Cockburn Street.
External signage and signposting	I believe the situation regarding external signage remains the same since my previous visit and that is: External signage and sign-posting was clear and not positioned too high up so that it could be seen by visually impaired people and wheelchair users.
Internal directional signage	The Collective has two gallery spaces with level access, off the main entrance area. This makes internal signage almost unnecessary. Nevertheless, it is quite bold and clearly written.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> * The nearest disability parking is on Market street, a few minutes walk away. * The Collective has level access and a wide doorway into the building, suitable for wheelchair users; an accessible loo and an induction loop facility. * The reception area is quite bright and lighting levels are usually good, although lighting was dimmed for this Show. * There was no BSL interpreted talks or guided tours for hearing impaired visitors available for this Exhibition and its associated events. * However, guided tours with description services were available for visually impaired visitors on request. * There was seating in the main reception area and also in Gallery 2 for all visitors to use. <p>Please Note: Jason Nelson brought a wheelchair user along to see the Show. On average, the Collective is visited by a wheelchair user once a month. Artlink also sometimes bring visitors with learning difficulties to events but</p>

Criteria	Comment
	during the past year, there have been no bookings for visitors with sensory impairments.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	I spent over an hour at this Event. Even so, I felt I could have spent more time absorbing the artwork and listening to the fascinating narratives and audience feedback, had the Show been running longer.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Customer service was excellent and welcoming. My gallery tour was very professionally conducted and my guide was highly informed.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	There is a plaque on the wall of the main entrance which displays the SAC logo. It is also found on all exhibition material and on the Collective Gallery website.

² In press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, company's website, notices display, exhibition materials, websites and advertising, recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, computer programmes etc.) Where the event is publicised in the programme brochure of another organisation (eg venue, gallery, etc) then SAC acknowledgement should appear against the particular programme entry for this event.

3. Organisation's Comments (optional)

This is the organisation's opportunity to respond to points raised within this assessment. Please do not feel obliged to fill this section in. In the spirit of the Quality Framework, we would ask that any comments are self-evaluating, providing an insight as to why, if there is, a major disagreement of response between the organisation and the evaluation, in a constructive way.

This will not alter the rating given by the assessment, but will allow the organisation the opportunity to give their opinion/feedback. The Scottish Arts Council reserves the right to edit comments if they are deemed to be libellous or defamatory.

As the Scottish Arts Council implements the Quality Framework internally, we intend to publish artistic evaluations on organisations that we support regularly on our website. The final artistic evaluation, including the organisation's response will be published on a quarterly basis on our website.

Please keep your response to max 500 words. If we do not hear from you in 15 days, we will assume that you do not want to respond.