



## 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:** New Territories (New Moves International)

**Venue:** The Arches and Tramway, Glasgow

**Title of Event :** The National Review of Live Art

**Type of Event:** 5 day live art performance festival

**Date of Visit:** Friday 13<sup>th</sup> and Saturday 14<sup>th</sup> February

**Overall Rating:** 5 – Excellent

The National Review of Live Art is a long-established 5 day festival produced and curated by New Moves International. It is an International Festival with a great number and variety of performances from world renowned artists to emerging 'elevator' artists. The 2009 event was highly innovative in its scope, programming unique and original work that was as challenging, provoking and questioning as it was beautiful and moving.

In general NRLA was packed and crowded, and much time was spent in queues, with no guarantee of getting in to the performance. While it is not possible to see everything anyway because of the sheer volume of work to be experienced, having experienced NRLA for a number of years, I felt this year's event was not quite 'bedded in' to The Arches.

Name: Janice Parker

Date: 5<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Specialist Advisor

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	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.	5	NRLA is an International Festival with a great number and variety of performances from world renowned artists to emerging 'elevator' artists. It is always highly experimental and aims to be so. 2009 was no exception. The vision and scope was wide ranging and of high quality, with the artists involved delivering their work with intensity and commitment.
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <p>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>	5	<p>NRLA is a 5 day Festival produced and curated by New Moves International. It is a Festival of 29 years standing. This intensive 5 days forms part of New Territories which runs for a further 5 weeks, the latter profiling full scale performance, events and winter schools. Artists at NRLA are either invited and/or commissioned. NRLA kick starts New Territories but also works as a stand alone event.</p> <p>As ever 2009 was highly innovative in its scope, programming unique and original work that was as challenging, provoking and questioning as it was beautiful and moving. I am left with the memory of some very powerful performances and profound images. NRLA, as it is set up to do, continues to push, develop, profile and discuss new boundaries in performance.</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 <sup>1</sup>below for guidance</p>	5	NRLA very much follow its stated aims. It is experimental, eclectic and challenging; and aims to constantly change and evolve and be at the forefront of new artistic practice. Preview material states this clearly as does the web site and the programme. NRLA is set up very much as an intense and eclectic experience. Again this was achieved.
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>	5	There are many many performers within NRLA, and within that, many distinct and varied performance styles and formats. This is part of the intrinsic nature of the festival and of the live art artform. All the performers that I saw were extremely serious, committed to and thoughtful about their work and its delivery. This generated an intensity and overall vibrancy that was a powerfully emotional and thought provoking experience in many guises and forms.

<sup>1</sup> 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
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	5	<p>The choreography is not traditional or conventional. NRLA aims to programme new aesthetics and languages. It did this very successfully providing some very challenging work for its audiences. Often the work crosses boundaries between art forms and works with and from different art forms to devise and develop the performance. Work ranged from text based, film, movement based, lectures, object based, in silence, with live music, with recorded music, with elements of improvisation, completely set, interactive, durational lasting a number of days to works of a few minutes using deliberately high or low production values. This makes each work highly original, distinctive and unique.</p> <p>One cannot be compared to the other but overall the work (over 90 performances in total over the 5 days) was exciting, memorable, well crafted, and deliberate and often pushing boundaries through its content and form.</p>
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	5	See above
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	5	See above
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.	5	See above
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.	4	<p>The work was programmed throughout The Arches, utilising, at different times, all the various spaces and nooks and crannies within the vast caverns of the building. I did feel that, at times, some of the spaces were not always best suited to the particular performance presented there, and also, at times, that how the space was used overall was confusing (particularly where the queues were meant to form) and did not always maximize on an ease of movement within the space that allowed for seeing the maximum amount of work. There was the feeling that the festival had not really ‘bedded in’ to the Arches building (NRLA used to be in the Arches but has been in Tramway for a number of years) and that it had suffered slightly from this move.</p> <p>On saying that it is no mean feat to programme and stage-manage such a diverse and vast array of performances and overall it did work</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p><b>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</b></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>	5	<p>Again, there was such a variety. Overall the technical presentation was of a high standard and uniquely supporting of the piece. This is a big job in a festival of this scale (upwards of 20 different performance events a day). Some performances required minimal technical back up, while others employed full scale production values. There was the odd 'blip' but this was always rectified and did not seem to affect the overall programming</p>
All	<p><b>Audience</b></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, enthusiasm, number involved, etc</p>		<p>The Friday and Saturday sold out completely (350 per day). The evening performances, in Tramway on the Saturday evening, allowed for a bigger capacity and accommodated audience who had been too late to purchase a day ticket for the Arches. The Wednesday, Thursday and Sunday were close to being full. NRLA is a very popular event, with an international audience, that is increasing yearly.</p> <p>On saying that many people complain that NRLA is inaccessible. Someone who was 'trying it out' for the first time complained that it was too chaotic and they could not fathom out what to do or what was expected of them. While this anarchic and unusual way is part and parcel of the style of the work I could see this person's point of view. It is indeed disorienting and confusing, certainly initially. Equally I spoke to someone who had not come before because she thought it would be too exposing, fearing the usual audience-performer boundary to be crossed and also that she would be shown up as not being 'intelligent' enough to 'get' the work. Her key in had been through colleagues who guided her through the process and laid her misgivings to rest. As part of its spectrum of works NRLA involves nudity, blood and extreme physicality, which is a terrifying, prospect for many people and perhaps (for audiences, not for NRLA) a step very far beyond a usual comfort zone.</p> <p>It may be that a way forward for new audience members is to offer a means of initiation in the form of someone to accompany and guide them through their initial engagement with NRLA. I believe it is important that NRLA does not 'conform' to expected or 'safe' standards otherwise the cogency and power of the work would be lost. It is a Festival of great intensity that is demanding of its audiences and I think that is its point and purpose. It is by no means inaccessible it is simply so different that this makes it a frightening prospect to the newcomer. But an 'initiation/newcomer' experience might enable more curious people to cross that threshold. Not that everyone should be expected to, this is</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>very particular art, and it needs to be in order to fulfil its purpose.</p> <p>The audience also consists of a lot of students in training. While this is a good thing in itself, I felt that as audience numbers are increasing year by year, perhaps the students could be offered some kind of parallel programme which overlaps less with the general public. However this is all about balancing budgets, and atmosphere and energy and it would be important not to loose more than was potentially gained.</p> <p>In general NRLA was packed and crowded, and much time was spent in queues, with no guarantee of getting in to the performance. While it is not possible to see everything anyway because of the sheer volume of work to be experienced and less people means less atmosphere, I felt this year (having experienced NRLA for a number of years) NRLA was not quite 'bedded in' to The Arches (as mentioned earlier) While much of the work was certainly well suited to the Arches the overall feeling was, at times, of the sort of chaos that is not supportive chaos but more frenzied chaos with not quite enough of a support mechanism in place. I am sure The Master of Ceremonies would have relished an assistant! However my general experience was that it was a successful festival for its audience.</p>
All	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.	4	<p>There were daily artists talks built into the programme, giving an opportunity to discuss pertinent and relevant aspects of live art practice and development. And also the Winter Schools which run through the New Territories programme. These are week long professional development courses for artists led by highly experienced world class live art practitioners.</p> <p>There was also the launch of the NRLA archive which was informative in terms of aims and access, and information on 'The Space For Live Art' initiative, an international exchange programme on live art practice. This was on-going through the festival.</p> <p>There was also a series of artist's talks 'meeting points' at the start of each day enabling audience to hear the artist speak about their work and for Q&amp;A type discussion with the audience.</p> <p>Also the main New Territories programme contains details of all the participating artist web-sites, allowing for further research and communication. There was also the festival club each evening which gave an opportunity to socialise and talk, and there was a bar set up in the Arches where everyone could meet (It was drafty though and not many</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>people frequented it! The one in the 'middle bar' would have been a better option?!) NRLA is set up so that artists and audience members have many opportunities to talk, discuss and debate with each other both formally and informally.</p> <p>The programme itself is extremely informative and packed with text, images and information. Again this was criticised by some people who felt it prevented them from accessing the NRLA festival because it was 'too dense' and therefore 'inaccessible' Personally I completely disagree, finding the programme to be a very valuable resource both before, in preparation, and afterwards, as a follow up, thus enriching and supporting the NRLA programming. Also some artists handed out information sheets about their performance and there was also an array of artists cards with contact details, web-sites and background information available at the box-office entrance.</p> <p>There is also a programme printed on a daily basis. This was scant in comparison to everything else and very hard to read and follow. It would have benefitted from more detailed information, for example whether a piece was durational (and therefore drop-in) or required the audience to remain for its full running time, and from larger print.</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>		

## 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	(See Audience above)  Also the venue was running a parallel interactive performance with a massive audience going through in small groups (where to I have no idea as NRLA seemed to use all of the available space) While this did go very smoothly, and amazingly, almost imperceptively, I imagine that the workload of this combined with the workload of NRLA contributed to the sense of NRLA not being quite 'bedded in' to the venue. There was an incredible amount going on at one time and although the venue did pull it off I wonder if NRLA suffered slightly because of this.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	(See Additional Interpretive Activity above)
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.	There were a good number of preview articles in the media. The web site is very informative and detailed and is available in more than one format. I also got sent a preview dvd and direct e-mailing information. NRLA had its own (very informative) programme that was available in advance (although not to my knowledge in Edinburgh). And it was featured in The Arches brochure and Tramway's brochure. Perhaps a single page advance flyer would be advantageous and could be distributed more widely than the bigger programme.
Ease of booking and payment	I phoned to book my ticket and found it easy and efficient
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The venue is very central and easy to find
External signage and signposting	The signage is visible from the street
Internal directional signage	This was trickier. On arrival it was difficult to know where to go or what to do. Sometimes the staff didn't know either. There was a map on the back of the daily diary but this was also difficult for a lot of people. Also some of the rooms where the events were happening were not clearly marked and difficult to locate. And, as mentioned before, knowing where to form queues for 'hot tickets'/popular events, was at times confusing and frustrating. It was also very dark, which although added to the overall atmosphere, made it even more difficult to orient oneself. Signage did improve as time went on, more signage was evident and staff were better briefed and more informed
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	There was a wheelchair user at the event on one of the days that I was there and she was finding no difficulty in accessing the events. Unfortunately I did not get the chance to speak to her to check this out but I expect, though it may have been crowded and a tight squeeze, as it was for all of us at times, it would all have been possible

Criteria	Comment
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The days were long going from 10am to midnight or beyond. This is the nature of the Festival and contributes to the intensity and appreciation of the experience. It is equally possible to drop in and out of NRLA as the day-ticket mechanism allows you to do this. So audiences can choose how they want to experience the event
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	The staff were friendly and efficient, if not somewhat overwhelmed with the volume of work and people. I did get the impression that they had not always been fully briefed about what was going on, where and when, and consequently, at the beginning of the day, there were some mixed messages causing some frustration and chaos. This did improve on the second day that I was there. I think perhaps there were not quite enough staff to cover the volume of work
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	SAC logos were prominently displayed

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<sup>2</sup> 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.