



Scottish Arts Council

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: North Lands Creative Glass

Venue: Lybster Community Hall

Title of Event: 'Expression of Self' International Conference

Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)

Date of Visit: 1-2 September 2007

Overall Rating: Excellent

The last annual conference organised by the retiring Artistic Director Jane Bruce, this is an event which has reached full maturity. Excellence in glass technique is now assumed, allowing the conference to focus on the exploration of concepts. The drawing in of specialists from other sectors, not only in the arts, to share ideas, and of participants from outside the UK, provides a stimulating forum appropriate to the fluid nature of contemporary artistic practice.

(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.)

Name: _Helen Bennett _____ Date: __5/09/07__

Scottish Arts Council Officer

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	Already established as a thoughtfully programmed and well-managed annual event which successfully attracts an international audience, the 2007 conference was exceptional for the imagination and conviction with which theme 'Expression of Self' was carried through. The opening presentation by the Director of the Institute of Psychological Science at the University of Leeds provided a scientifically-based but provocative foundation for a stimulating weekend of discussion. This was reinforced by Ashley Page, an authoritative voice from another area of the arts.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned. If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.	5	One of the strengths of the conference is the solidity of the link to the masterclass programme, ensured by engaging the leaders of the masterclasses contribute as speakers. The quality of the work illustrated by the speakers was exceptionally high and the opportunity to experience output of a kind rarely exhibited in Scotland (such as that of Judith Schaechter and the de la Torre brothers) of special value.
All	Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes. Education events – see ¹ below for guidance	5	The question of identity was explored in detail. The inclusion of keynote speakers from outside the sector alongside artists who individually approached the issue in very different ways, successfully gave breadth and depth to the discussion.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	4	The large majority of speakers were effective communicators – some exceptionally so – which contributed to the lively debate and exchange of ideas throughout the conference. Naturally this was more difficult for speakers whose first language is not English but the strength of the visual aspects of presentations compensated for this.
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	

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
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>	3	<p>Although certainly adequate, the multi-purpose community hall is not ideal for a conference, and facilities do not match the quality of the programme. The issue of the visibility of visual content has been addressed but the sound system remains unpredictable and the bucket chairs are not comfortable for prolonged occupation. The close proximity of the Hall to the NLCG studios and local accommodation/catering is of course a logistical advantage.</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, enthusiasm, number involved, etc</p>	5	<p>The engagement of the audience seemed to be maintained at a high level throughout the conference. The majority of presentations provoked multiple questions and the panel session at the end of the conference, for which most delegates remained, was characterised by vigorous discussion.</p>
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>	5	<p>The core presentations were enhanced by the opportunity to see related artists' videos and a practical demonstration in the hot shop. The additional informal activities designed to introduce delegates to local culture (eg the visit to Dunbeath Castle Gardens; ceilidh dancing) confirm the sense of place which is an integral part of the conference experience</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>	N/A	

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating

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 'Quality of Presentation' above
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Information is provided in the conference pack and in the community hall about local studios, and events, facilities and venues in the region
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.	A comprehensive brochure about the conference and masterclasses is circulated in the spring to a large international mailing list including relevant educational institutions. This is backed up with information on the NLCG website
Ease of booking and payment	Simple and efficient
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Lybster, situated on the trunk road to Wick, can be reached by public transport, helpful information about which is given in the conference brochure
External signage and signposting	Given the nature of the event and the small scale of Lybster signposting is not much needed. A clear schematic plan is provided in the conference pack which shows the locations of accommodation, the various NLCG buildings, and various services.
Internal directional signage	Not relevant
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Immediately adjacent parking, level access and the availability of all facilities on one level is likely to be helpful to those with mobility issues, although I am not sure that there was a toilet suitable for wheelchair access. The failure of the sound system is likely to have been problematic for those with diminished hearing.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	The conference is strategically placed between the August and September masterclasses to allow the class leaders and participants to continue their discussions with the wider range of delegates who attend the conference (including curators, critics, collectors, educators). That the conference attendance is lower this year (60+ compared with an average of 80+) may be attributable to the counter-

Criteria	Comment
	attraction of the Contemporary Glass Society's 10 th birthday events in Cornwall at the end of the month.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Participants in the conference and masterclasses experience a high level of customer care. The greeting from staff is invariably warm and careful attention is paid to the comfort of participants and their individual needs. Board members, most of whom participated in the conference also contribute positively.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Clear acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council support is given on the website, on the brochure and conference pack. Verbal thanks were expressed at the beginning of the conference.

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.

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.

