



**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: Northlands Creative Glass**

**Venue: Northlands, Lybster, Caithness**

**Title of Event: 6 week Kiln Residency**

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

**Date of Visit: 8<sup>th</sup>-9th June '07**

**Overall Rating: 5**

*(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: Robert Saunders Date: 18 / 6 / 07

Specialist Advisor

*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	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	While I had not seen the work of the residents before my visit, I had an opportunity to study examples of their work illustrated in exhibition catalogues and publications of their work to date. The common objective of all of the artists was to break new ground, both technically and artistically. Technically they found the residency 'challenging' and for some, at times, problematic due to their trial and error approach. Due to the nature of the medium, the time required to assess the success or failure of the experiment was costly. However, the opportunity afforded at Northlands to stretch their capabilities was, for each resident, the principal reason for applying for a place. The work they produced they would classify as 'transitional' but in some cases, the piece was already approaching a maturity which could be measured against earlier prototype experiments. There was significant influence from the local environment, Scottish landscape, and in particular the changing vista of the North Sea.
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.		The residency is one of a number of six and eight week blocks on offer throughout the year, on a competitive basis, to talented glass artists from throughout the world. With regard to this residency, there had been 25 applicants for 4 places. The artists were from Britain, Europe and Australia.
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 <sup>1</sup> below for guidance	5	The residents all agreed that the experience and opportunity at Northlands had more than fulfilled their expectations, although they all admitted that it was the self imposed technical challenges which had provided the highs and lows. In balance it was a highly successful transitional experience in their artistic development.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.  Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	5	Each of the residents produced work of a high technical standard and were pleased to present and discuss their work, its process and development, and in particular, the influence which Northlands had afforded.

<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		
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.		
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.		
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.		
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.		
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	The studio and workshop space is very well equipped and technically supported. While the facility had originated as a school and school house in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century, its scale, space, access and overall environment would be difficult to better if custom built for this purpose.
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>	4	The studios are principally a working environment with equipment with significant health and safety implications the complex has an exhibition area where examples from the Permanent Collection are on show. During 2006 the Royal Museum of Scotland hosted a major exhibition of work from the Northlands Permanent Collection, with a further exhibition this year in Highland Council Art Gallery. The residents highly value the knowledge that they will not be disturbed by interruption and the studios were not generally open to direct interface with the public. The residents were happy to freely communicate with each other and I was made extremely welcome during my visit.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
T	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	Each resident is required to contribute one day per week to the Northlands Outreach Programme
All	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)?		A newly converted Outreach Studio and exhibition space is about to be opened this summer adjacent to the administration offices. Lybster Glass Week with introductory short courses for the community will run from the 15 <sup>th</sup> -20 <sup>th</sup> July'07.

## 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	Excellent facility with potential for expansion in adjacent property
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Range of information available (enclosed)
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 website is comprehensive and informative. It has the facility for the booking and hiring of the facility. General Leaflet Masterclass and Conference publicity/Booking form. Outreach Programme leaflet Major publication to mark the 10 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary Exhibition at the Royal Museum of Scotland All available at Northlands. I found no publicity elsewhere.
Ease of booking and payment	Both online and manual booking system.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	The facility is in a fairly remote location in the north east of Scotland. There is a local airport at Wick and public transport links. It is a 6 hour drive from Glasgow through spectacular scenery. The remoteness and proximity to the sea is part of its attraction.
External signage and signposting	No external signage apart from a plaque which commemorates the official opening by Prince Charles. It has acknowledgement to the Scottish Arts Council .
Internal directional signage	Yes
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	The facility is on one level with good access for people with disability. The new Outreach studio is also on one level.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	This residency was for 6 weeks which seemed a little short for some residents. There are 8 week residencies on offer at other times.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	The welcome and conducted tour by the Chief Executive and Chairman was excellent and most informative.

Criteria	Comment
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Acknowledgement to the Scottish Arts Council can be found on all publicity, website and external signage.

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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.