



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: Ann Messner, Ivan Moudov, Scott Myles, Dennis Oppenheim, Joel Ross, Jon Routson, Ulay, Timm Ulrichs, Allison Wiese

Venue: Peacock Visual Arts

Title of Event: Lifting - Theft in Art

Type of Event: Exhibition

Date of Visit: Tuesday 25 September 2007

Overall Rating: 4 - Good

(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.)

LIFTING presents art from the 1970s onwards by artists who have- or claim to have- crossed a legal or moral line and committed theft under the name of art. Their motivations are diverse, from the frivolously mischievous to the critique of cultural structures.

Borrowing and 'appropriation' have long since had a presence within the creative process. However, the artists within this exhibition have deliberately made the act of theft a fundamental part of the process. The resulting work tests the boundaries of what is morally and ethically acceptable within society, and engages with the ways in which legal and cultural significance are attributed to property. (Taken from Lifting publicity leaflet, 2007)

This was a very interesting and morally challenging event. It was able to surprise and stimulate debate around the issue of 'stealing' as a legitimate artistic activity. The artwork on show even made me question my own attitude towards the practice in a manner I had not expected.

It was a multimedia exhibition, making good use of video, photography, sound and tactile elements which produced a powerful effect. Customer service was also very good.

However, 'Lifting' was greatly disadvantaged by the present location of Peacock Visual Arts, poor disability access and lack of targeted publicity to a wider local audience.

The initial impact of this Exhibition was strangely subtle and almost understated, made up as it was of everyday, familiar objects such as hubcaps and door wedges. Even the idea of reproducing pirated films or having the temptation of clothes displayed for everyone to freely handle and take away, are now so familiar to us all that such activities are simply accepted and almost overlooked. In reflecting this activity back to the visitor, 'Lifting' was curiously powerful and shocking. Yet, at the same time, the Exhibition also possessed an underlining humour and evoked a certain degree of empathy with the artist and their motivations.

Name: _____Rosita McKenzie_____ Date: Tuesday 23 October 2007

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>		<p>The ideas and the variety of methods used to 'lift' the objects exhibited were, in many cases, highly imaginative and inspired. Clearly, each artist was motivated by her/his own reasons for the unorthodox behaviour undertaken but the artworks presented a fascinating insight to human psychology and impulses that may otherwise have stayed buried.</p> <p>The pieces I found to be most original, ingenious and memorable were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * By Scott Miles whose artwork was displayed behind glass but it depicted his concept of stealing a magazine from one news agent in a particular chain of shops before he began a train journey. Then, at his destination, he would return the magazine to another news agent in that same chain, so that in reality, he was only borrowing the magazine and not really stealing it at all. * By Ulay whose artwork was in the form of a big image on the wall (like a comic book strip of action). The piece spoke about stealing paintings from art galleries and then giving/sharing them with poor or socially excluded people who would normally never visit an art gallery and have the opportunity to experience the artworks. * By Ann Messner (I believe). This video piece showed the artist firstly in a street market where she was openly putting on tea shirts but not paying for them. She is then seen in a clothes shop, doing the same thing whilst other shoppers look on. Her behaviour and intent are very blatant and confident. The artwork was tantalising and I wanted to know what happened next! * By Timm Ulrichs. This photographic piece was documentation of the artist actually stealing a work of art from a gallery in 1970. The action was obviously carefully planned and executed with very serious intent - whether through jealousy or disapproval. Thus this piece disturbed very uncomfortable feelings but was thrilling for all that!
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>		<p>This Event was curated by Atopia Projects.</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>Based on the following premise: 'Lesser artists borrow; great artists steal.' - Igor Stravinsky (also attributed to Pablo Picasso), I believe this Exhibition successfully conveyed its artistic theme and challenged the visitor to examine his/her own ethical code in relation to the notion of stealing or purloining objects in an artistic context.</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>		I felt the gallery spaces were used well with a variety of presentation formats employed e.g. video with sound, projected onto a wall and display cases for photographs. Floor space was used to display the hubcaps, yet there was still clear space to move around easily.
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>I understand that 'Lifting' received very good audience response.</p> <p>Visitor numbers were quite high overall with 8 to 10 visitors generally a day. Doors Open Day in fact, attracted 110 over the period of two days. Also, at the time of my visit, there was a group of third-year art students visiting the Show.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc		
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.		<p>As far as I could ascertain, the programme of events was designed for young and older adults - not children. This programme consisted of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> * Artist Talk and Discussion Saturday 25 August, 2.30pm Atopia projects, artist Scott Myles and others discuss legality and crime in relation to art. Location: main gallery, Admission free * Film Programme (admission free) Thursday, 30 August, 6:30pm: Sonic Outlaws Thursday, 6 September, 6:30pm: There is a Criminal Touch to Art / The Sean Connery Golf Project Thursday, 13 September, 6:30pm: The Yes Men Thursday, 20 September, 6:30pm: Pickpocket * Bootleg Workshop Saturday 8 September, 2-4pm. Gavin and Fraser from atopia projects
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)?		n/a

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	<p>I felt that this Exhibition was well-managed as far as it went. Nonetheless, Peacock Visual Arts has much to do in relation to widening their audiences and in this regard, I feel staff will need to undertake a programme of general and specific disability equality training.</p> <p>The Gallery was suitable for this Exhibition but the artwork on display will suffer from the fact that the venue is tucked away and not well known among the general population. For instance, staff have very little contact with visually impaired visitors, if at all. Also, when my Husband and I were trying to find the venue, passers-by could not help us because they were not familiar with the building.</p>
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	<p>Interpretation is currently available in traditional formats. Large-print is available on request but Braille and audio material is not specially produced.</p> <p>The Gallery does have a small bookshelf area where visitors can read books, articles and other written material about the artists and exhibition.</p>
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.	<p>I was first aware of this Exhibition in the Spring when I was asked to conduct an evaluation of it by the SAC Visual Arts Department. However, it was postponed until August/September 2007 and it was only then that I received background information regarding the Show.</p> <p>The Peacock Visual Arts website provides excellent information about its events and activities. Nevertheless, it isn't fully accessible for voice screen-reading software. I believe this matter has already been drawn to the Organisation's attention.</p>
Ease of booking and payment	Admission to this Event was free-of-charge and I had no difficulty booking a guided tour.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	<p>Peacock Visual Arts is situated at: 21 Castle Street, Aberdeen AB11 5BQ.</p> <p>However, it is difficult to find if you are not local. It is somewhat hidden away and the street names in the area are confusing because they seem to be repeated.</p> <p>Also, I was told that staff seldom meet visually impaired visitors, either as groups or as individuals. So, clearly greater efforts must be made to publicise Peacock Visual Arts and its services to the Visually Impaired Community in Aberdeen and surrounding areas. This is particularly important for visually impaired arts students, artists and audiences. I suspect also that other impairment groups e.g. hearing impaired, people with epilepsy, mental health difficulties or learning difficulties are missing out because they are not aware of the facilities and activities that Peacock Visual Arts offer or could offer.</p>
External signage and signposting	This venue is hidden away from the main thoroughfare, making it difficult to find on foot or by car/taxi. However, there is clear, directional signage to the building once visitors locate the alleyway leading to it.
Internal directional signage	This is good, although the Gallery spaces are a little way from the main reception area.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	<p>* Disability parking and access to the venue is not particularly convenient. There is the Castle car park and taxi drop-off point situated by St. Bernardos but then everyone has to come down an alleyway to get to the Gallery.</p> <p>* Also the building is currently only partially wheelchair accessible.</p> <p>* For instance, entrance into both galleries is wheelchair accessible but one area of the gallery is at a slightly higher level with one or two steps to climb in order to view the artwork at close-hand.</p> <p>* The lower workshops are accessible.</p> <p>* The framing workshop however, is up a set of stairs but I understand, the framers are more than happy to come down to assist customers.</p>

Criteria	Comment
	<p>* In addition, the venue does not have an induction loop system.</p> <p>* Nevertheless, Peacock Visual Arts have a new-build programme in place and their new premises in Union Terrace Gardens, will have greatly improved disability access and facilities.</p> <p>* Lighting in the existing gallery spaces is very good.</p> <p>* There are two magnifying sheets for customers to view the work more easily.</p> <p>* There is also some seating available.</p> <p>* Finally, a gallery assistant is on hand at all times to assist anyone who requires help and guide visitors around the exhibition.</p>
<p>Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?</p>	<p>I spent about an hour going around this Exhibition- time well spent because it was quite provocative and enthralling!</p>
<p>Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)</p>	<p>The Customer Service at this venue was very good. Our Gallery Guide was friendly, well-informed and helpful. In fact, I felt that all visitors would be welcomed with the same accommodating approach and that staff would do their best to meet visitor requirements.</p>
<p>Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²</p>	<p>The SAC logo is displayed prominently on all literature, fliers and the Peacock Visual Arts website.</p>

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.