



## 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:** Craig Barrowman  
**Venue:** Peacock Visual Arts, Aberdeen  
**Title of Event:** Castlegate  
**Type of Event:** Exhibition  
**Date of Visit:** 18 March 2009  
**Overall Rating:** 3 - Competent

*(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.)*

Peacock presents work on a regular basis by artists based in Aberdeen and the North East. Local artist Craig Barrowman sent in a proposal which was accepted by the curatorial staff, fitting in with their overall vision. The premise of the exhibition was to focus on an area of Aberdeen which is used by hundreds of Aberdonians on a daily basis - a civic square which was once the 'heart of Aberdeen.' The artist presented sound works, sculpture and photography in an attempt to offer a 'slice of the city' and to home in on things that perhaps regular users of the square may not have noticed. I liked the idea of the exhibition but the overall result was not especially interesting. The execution of some of the artworks was quite poor. However, I think the workshop which Craig led for young people, was of particular note. I did not see the workshop in action but the resulting artworks produced by the participants were well conceived, for example, using kaleidoscopes and cameras to create skewed views of the Castlegate.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_Helen Monaghan\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_20\_\_/\_04\_\_/\_2009\_\_

**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>	3	<p>Craig Barrowman's exhibition set out to explore an area of Aberdeen called the Castlegate, an historic civic square, which for centuries, was the market square of the city comprising the Tolbooth Tower and the Market Cross. It is known as the 'historic heart of Aberdeen' but is now home to boarded up shops, all day drinking pubs, the Salvation Army and William Hill.</p> <p>As you entered the exhibition, the space was dominated by a large, meteor-esque sculpture painted blue which was based on a stone found by the artist in the Castlegate. The walls were also painted blue and darkly lit so it was quite hard to see at first or get into the smaller room at the back of the gallery. In the smaller space, was a large blue satellite dish - described by the artist as a 'Sound Collector' - a 10-minute looped sound recording of sounds gathered in the Castlegate. These sounds had been slowed down and included the noise of traffic, babies crying, conversations, noisy pubs, bells ringing and rain. Four small framed photographs depicted details of buildings or shop-front exteriors and then a further 5 photographs had been taken by another artist, Jo Lyczko, of people who either work or spend time in the area. Finally, there was a screen mounted on the wall showing Aberdeen City Council's website of the area which refreshes every minute.</p> <p>I think the idea behind the exhibition was to present a 'slice of the city', bringing things that you may not have noticed about Castlegate into focus, for example, the sounds and the people who use this square, were presented in the gallery space. However, the overall impact was quite disappointing. The sound piece was quite hard to decipher but this may have been due to the fact that the recordings were made when it was snowing outside! The framed photographs - particularly the portrait photographs - had no information about who these people were so they remained anonymous. I wasn't sure what the artist was trying to say about Castlegate as it wasn't communicated clearly.</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>	3	<p>The artist Craig Barrowman submitted a proposal to Peacock Visual Art in response to their 'Get Involved' section on their website which encourages artists to submit proposals and explain how the project proposed relates to the vision of Peacock Visual Arts. One of the key aims of the Peacock is 'to play a leading role in nurturing a culture of creativity in Aberdeen and the North East of Scotland'. Craig Barrowman is a local artist and his exhibition relates specifically to Castlegate, a civic square located near Peacock.</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>	3	<p>On the website, there was small paragraph about the exhibition which explained that the artist had created an exhibition based on different experiences and elements of the Castlegate - an historic civic square where hundreds of Aberdonians pass daily to and from the</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	Education events – see <sup>1</sup> below for guidance		beach, harbour and city centre. The artist has been collecting 'information' from the Castlegate for the exhibition. However, the overall result of this information gathering, and how it was presented, was not particularly engaging or well executed.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.  Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	2	I thought that some of the execution of the artworks was of poor quality. It was an interesting subject matter, particularly when you read the information panels in the square itself about the history behind Castlegate, including the Tolbooth Tower and Market Cross. This was not brought out in the exhibition.
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.		
All	Quality of Presentation/Engagement  Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).  Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang  Education events - relevance/appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.		The way the exhibition was installed meant that you could not access all the artworks if you were disabled. Having said that, the huge sculpture which dominated the space as you entered, certainly made an impact and was unexpected.  On the opening night, there was a performance by artist Ruaraidh Sanachan who remixed live the sound recordings collected by Craig Barrowman.  Craig Barrowman also led a photography workshop for young people using disposable and digital cameras in the Castlegate - the results are currently on view on Flickr.
All	Audience  Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction		There was no one else visiting the show during my visit. The comments book was fairly positive. There were around 150 people at the opening night/performance.

<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
	<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>		
All	<p><b>Additional Interpretative activity</b> – 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 workshop for young people led by the artist was of particular interest going on the results shown on Flickr. The aim of the workshop was to help participants see the Castlegate in a different way. Through the medium of photography, the group created a range of images - sometimes using kaleidoscopes - to gain a different view of Castlegate, focusing in on hidden details from architectural features to signage.</p>
All	<p><b>Outcomes of education activity</b> – 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>		<p>It was good to see that the young people attending the workshop had the opportunity to work directly with the artist, trying out different photography techniques.</p> <p>No follow-up sessions planned.</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? **There are Equalities<sup>2</sup> issues with several boxes eg signage, interpretation, ease of booking and publicity. Do they publicise Stagetext / BSL interpreted performances? What provision is there for visually impaired people? Is the interpretation intellectually accessible (available in Easy English)?**

Criteria	Comment
Suitability of the venue for the event	Good exhibition space however if you were disabled, you would not have been able to view the works in the smaller space as the gallery was dominated by the huge sculpture which did not allow access.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	An information sheet giving a description of the works on display.
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 small paragraph on their website as well as flyers at the Gallery and at other venues in Aberdeen
Ease of booking and payment	n/a
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Yes, very central and near the train station.
External signage and signposting	Yes good signage
Internal directional signage	Yes
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	The gallery is on one level but this is a step up to the smaller gallery. In this particular case, anyone in a wheelchair or with walking difficulties would not have been able to enter the smaller gallery because of the sculpture. It was also darkly lit.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Yes helpful
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>3</sup>	Logo on flyers and information sheet and on website and other publicity.

<sup>2</sup> For more information look at [Getting There](http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/information/publications/1003364.aspx) <http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/information/publications/1003364.aspx>

<sup>3</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 Reply (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 disparity of response between the organisation and the evaluator, 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, defamatory or inaccurate.

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**. The Scottish Arts Council will require any response back within 15 working days of your receipt of this evaluation.