



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:

Venue: PORTFOLIO magazine

Title of Event: issue 47

Type of Event Biannual photography publication

Date of Visit: July 2008

Overall Rating: 4

(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.)

Portfolio consistently presents a range of high quality photographic work and essays in a quality publication reflecting this specific area of contemporary practice.

Their partnership work with venues, such as Streetlevel in Glasgow, and institutions like Jerwood Foundation are positive and developmental.

Issue 47 contained less critical writing than previous issues which was less effective in introducing some of the less-established artists' work to the reader.

The website would benefit from development in order to fulfil the wider aims of the publication, improve its design and extend the international audience for the publication.

Name: Kirsteen Macdonald

Date: 3 August 2008

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.	4	This issue of the magazine contains a good variety of work, including leading artists such as Ori Gersch and Edward Burtynsky, covering contemporary themes and issues from global land use to self-identity and displacement. The magazine always covers emerging and established practices. The balance of these is critical to the success of each issue and Portfolio's overall aims.
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.	4	Portfolio is produced in Scotland from a UK perspective with contributions from international photographers and writers in a classic magazine format. Portfolio's partnership with Jerwood Foundation and the ensuing photography awards is a positive addition to the rolling editorial approach of the magazine. Each year, in one biannual publication, the selected photographers are presented with an accompanying essay, creating a focussed overview of emergent work in a critical framework. This approach is more successful than in the issue under review where work by 6 photographers appears in the latter half of the magazine without accompanying texts.
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	3	Portfolio's primary function is as a printed anthology of current practice in a high-end publication. The magazine's other main function is to contextualise the images in a critical framework. "Combining the current reviews and contemporary interest of a magazine with the quality reproductions of an art book". Overall, the magazine fulfils a unique role within the UK art scene, promotes itself well and publishes interesting new work. However, Issue 47 had less writing than I expected (13 artists / 5 writers). By comparison Issue 44 had 14 artists / 8 writers; Issue 28 (1998) 13 artists / 14 writers. More writing about the less-established artists in Issue 47 would give parity to the different levels of practice featured. Critical writing is essential to meet Portfolio's aims.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage. Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.	N/a	
All	Quality of Presentation/Engagement Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).	4	The bi-annual issuing of the magazine makes it most suited to the reproduction of high quality images, rather than exhibition reviews which have an intrinsic time-based element. The simple design echoes the format of a white

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
	<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>		<p>cube exhibition space in print with images set on white backgrounds, usually one image per page and discrete titles. Portfolio has maintained its position and neutral design aesthetic despite changing media formats and habits of information sharing over the past decade or so, giving it a sense of timelessness.</p> <p>As a regular reader there is a danger of becoming over-familiar with the magazine format leading to reduced interest towards the back of the magazine (especially in this issue where there is no writing to kindle further interest in the work).</p> <p>The essays in Issue 47 offer increased understanding through the writers' firsthand experience of the work (describing the work in an exhibition context, the scale of original prints, modes of presentation such as lightboxes), in contrast to the reader's experience of the images reproduced at the same scale in the magazine.</p> <p>The quality of the writing is high and the use of a recently commissioned text from an exhibition at Streetlevel, Glasgow offers wider distribution for that author. Many of the writers in the magazine have been contributors for a number of years. A small criticism would be the lack of a development programme for young writers in Scotland or the UK in the way that the Jerwood Photography Awards supports the publishing and exhibition of new work.</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>	N/a	<p>It is difficult to assess readership.</p> <p>There is no information on circulation in the magazine or on the website.</p> <p>Retail distribution through Central Books – the main supplier of art titles in the UK. The magazine is pitched as a collectible publication. It is available from all major art publication retailers and in public libraries.</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>	3	<p>Portfolio's website has the potential to present more information in tandem with the publication, for example by showing installation views of work; hosting reviews of relevant shows; blogs and links. The web presents an international interface and an additional form of publishing. With development, Portfolio's site could reflect further trends relevant to photography and add value to the publication as an educational resource.</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	

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	N/a
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	The editor's introduction is concise and appropriate.
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.	Portfolio regularly produces and direct mails flyers with information on back issues and subscriptions. Flyers are designed and printed to the same high standard as the magazine with simple information suitable for a broad readership. The layout of the website is simple and has useful services such as an online order facility. It may be useful to add information on magazine advertising rates. However, the page design does not reflect the same high quality design as the magazine. As noted above the website has the potential to increase Portfolio's educational potential and enhance its international critical position. The website name portfoliocatalogue.com can be tricky to remember and there are other publications named Portfolio on the market.
Ease of booking and payment	Online, postal and phone service for payments are all effective.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	N/a
External signage and signposting	N/a
Internal directional signage	N/a
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	I was not aware of any special features on the website but didn't test it with any browsing software. Both the web and printed page use a simple black font on white background.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	N/a
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	N/a
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	Black and white logo on colour contents page of magazine. No logo visible on website.

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.