



**ARTISTIC EVALUATION: Visual Art and Crafts**

This evaluation is intended to represent an objective aesthetic judgement. **Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences wherever possible.**

<b>Artist:</b>	<b>PORTFOLIO magazine</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>n/a</b>
<b>Title of Event :</b>	<b>Portfolio Issue 50</b>
<b>Type of Event:</b>	<b>Publication</b>
<b>Date of Visit:</b>	<b>November 2009</b>
<b>Overall Rating:</b>	<b>Good</b>
<i>(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – ie 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.)</i>	
Name: Caroline Kirsop	Date: 13 <sup>th</sup> December 2009
Scottish Arts Council Officer	<b>Specialist Advisor</b>

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 on 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 future 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:**

**Very poor-** standard falls well below what is acceptable.

**Poor** - not well conceived and executed

**Satisfactory**

**Good** - well conceived and executed

**Very Good** – well conceived and executed to a very good standard

**Excellent** – Inspiring and executed to an exceptionally high standard

## 1. Artistic Assessment

Please evaluate the artistic quality of the event, with particular reference to the strengths and weaknesses of the following:

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
<p>Vision and imagination of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Quality of ideas, execution of work and installation</li> <li>if you have seen other work of this artist(s) before, please comment on any relevant comparisons</li> </ul>	<p>Good</p>	<p>Portfolio has a very distinct format that is both recognisable and professional.</p> <p>The presentation of the artworks and texts in issue 50 are very clear and simple and executed to a very high standard with a strong focus on presenting the artworks as though one were viewing the works first hand.</p> <p>For this special 50<sup>th</sup> edition 50 artists are given two pages in which to present their newest works. Although the quality of the reproductions is extremely high and the artists represented are very diverse, the approach to the given two pages (all works are framed within the white border of the page) seems slightly formulaic.</p> <p>Perhaps in this edition it might have been an opportunity play with the format or allowed the possibility for the artist to push the boundaries of the format/ their two pages, and given each artist more of an individual voice and as a result presented a more dynamic overview of the 50 most significant artist photographers working in the UK today.</p>
<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation?</li> <li>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</li> </ul>	<p>Good</p>	<p>The curatorial approach for this 50<sup>th</sup> issue was one of presenting 50 of the most significant artist photographers working in the UK today and placing them in the historical context of how photography has changed over the course of the magazines' 21 years.</p> <p>Taking an exhibition presented in 1979 called the 'Three Perspectives on Photography' as a starting point for this overview it asks three writers to present their professional and personal views. Curatorially this is a neat concept to find three different voices/ perspectives for photography today- 30 years on. The writers each outline the history from 1979, highlighting particular trends and particular significant exhibitions and technological developments through the decades. The essays were very well written and very informative, however there was perhaps room for these voices to be more diverse or more varied in response to the brief.</p> <p>The curatorial selection was well chosen showing a broad range of artists at different points in their career (also equal male and female representation), many of whom have featured in past issues and received notable acclaim. However there are other approaches that are not represented for example- Bate's mentions in his essay '<i>participatory art or photography as 'social intervention' (art based in dialogue and discussion, photographed performance-events, staged scenarios, public participation etc)</i>. It would have been nice to have seen something from this area of photographic art work.</p> <p>Another noticeable theme from the writers was the advancement of technology over the last 30years and how common place photography is now. David Bate's has a section on his website called Phonepics - this alternative approach and acknowledgment of the everyday nature of photography now would also have been an interesting addition.</p>

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
<p>Success of event against stated aims of exhibition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material?</li> <li>• How well did it communicate the artistic themes?</li> <li>• How did the event originate eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission?</li> </ul> <p>Education events – see <sup>1</sup>below for definition</p>	Good	<p>Communicated the themes well and clearly through the editorial introduction.</p> <p>Content good and met the aims.</p>
<p>Quality of Public Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of space and overall layout/hang?</li> <li>• What interpretation or support materials were available?</li> <li>• Were labels/maps available and how appropriate were they?</li> <li>• Was a Visitor Book available or opportunities for audiences to comment/interact? What were the comments like overall?</li> <li>• What activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info?</li> </ul>	Very good	<p>Portfolio is a brand which is easily recognisable and appeals to the specialised audience.</p> <p>Technical standards of presentation are excellent. Very clearly laid out.</p> <p>Information about the included artists is minimal but in this 'survey' as much as it can be so does provide a useful tool for further ready/ researching.</p> <p>Have no information regarding its circulation.</p>

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<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.

## 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																
<b>Location and suitability of the venue for the event</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is it easy to find?</li> <li>Is it on a main transport route?</li> <li>Are the spaces clean?</li> <li>How suitable was it for the exhibition?</li> </ul>	n/a																
<b>Information/ interpretive material at venue</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event?</li> <li>Is there information on the venue's website?</li> </ul>	n/a																
<b>Publicity/ pre-publicity</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in?</li> <li>What publicity materials are produced?</li> <li>Is it easy to understand/appropriate to the intended audience?</li> <li>Where can you get the information?</li> <li>Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding<sup>2</sup>?</li> </ul> <p>Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.</p>	<p>Website is quite basic and functional.</p> <p>Seems to serve primarily as a tool for subscribing, purchasing and viewing the archive.</p> <p>A magazine with such high production values should have an on-line presence to match</p> <p>The archived magazines are not dated, although they are numbered, it is useful to contextualise the year of production.</p> <p>It could be a useful tool to develop further to gain more audiences.</p> <p>Acknowledgement of SAC funding in magazine could not find acknowledgement on the website</p>																
<b>Signage and signposting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the entrance clearly marked?</li> <li>Is there clear internal directional signage?</li> <li>Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops?</li> </ul>	n/a																
<b>Access and provision for disabled people</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event</li> </ul> <p>Please add in any additional comments below the table</p>	<table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> <th></th> <th>Yes/No</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>BSL interpretation</td> <td></td> <td>Audio description</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td></td> <td>Lift/ramp</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accessible toilets</td> <td></td> <td>Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation		Audio description		Captioning		Lift/ramp		Accessible toilets		Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	
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<b>Customer service</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How was the quality and</li> </ul>	n/a																

<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.

Criteria	Comment
efficiency of staff (invigilators etc) • If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers?	

### 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.

As is the case with many new assessors at SAC, the low grading does not reflect the actual wording of the assessment, which should have placed it within the 'Very Good' category. There are, however, some comments included in this assessment, which invite comment. The charming but unrealistic suggestion that Portfolio could have encouraged each of its 50 contributors to design the layout for their section in the publication denies the reality that most photographers prefer to have their work shown uncropped and framed by white space. The assessment also demonstrates a lack of awareness of contemporary photographic practice – ie there are examples of photographed performance-events and staged scenarios included in the selection, whereas the suggestion that it would have been interesting for the selection to have included Phonepics — these are missing because they simply do not fit the brief.

Gloria Chalmers  
 Editor, Portfolio  
 29 December 2009

