



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.**

Artist:	50 of UK's most significant artist photographers
Venue:	Publication: Portfolio – contemporary photography in Britain, magazine/catalogue
Title of Event :	Fifty artist photographers for special edition 50
Type of Event:	Catalogue quality magazine edition with essays
Date of Visit:	N/A Published November 2009
Overall Rating:	Very Good

(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.)

The concept for the special 50th edition was excellent and well fitted to the artistic vision of Portfolio as “the premier magazine for innovative photographic art created and shown in the UK”. The images presented were mostly strong and the essays on the history of photography over the last 3 decades were engaging. The quality of publication is beautiful. The slight deficit is in the absence of text that might connect the viewer of the images to an understanding of how (for Portfolio) these 50 artist photographers represent the range and diversity of contemporary practice in 2009.

Name: Jane Jeffrey

Date: December 7th 2009

Specialist Advisor

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"> • Quality of ideas, execution of work and installation • if you have seen other work of this artist(s) before, please comment on any relevant comparisons 	Excellent	<p>The work is that of 50 significant artist photographers presented in a special 50th edition of Portfolio along with 3 essays of personal and professional analysis. It is a body of accomplished recent work from a range of established artists which demonstrates the diversity of ideas and practice that drive them as individuals. The examples they contributed represent their current engagement with photography. The progression of quality and exploration of ideas is evident in the work of those I have seen before and/or explored further as a result of this publication. The technical competence of the visual source work is unquestionable, and the print quality of the catalogue images excellent. The three essays provide an illuminating context, exploring dynamic aspects of photography as art in Britain since the pivotal exhibition <i>Three Perspectives on Photography: Recent British Photography was shown at the Hayward Gallery in 1979</i>.</p>
<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation? • If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme. 	Very Good	<p>This special edition fits well within Portfolio's stated aim to feature "the work of established artist photographers accompanied by in-depth essays by esteemed writers and curators". It is also a celebration of 21 years of the publication and had a particular aim to present a survey, albeit incomplete, of photographic art in Britain in 2009, and to explore through the essays the dramatic ways in which photography has evolved over the last 3 decades using the 1979 exhibition as the starting point and charting the influence of cultural, economic, and technological impacts on the shifts in practice. Given the magazine's status as "the premier magazine for innovative photographic art created and shown in the UK" the theme for this edition was well-chosen. Whether the 50 artist photographers invited to contribute are truly a definitive embodiment of current practice is of course debatable (as are all curatorial and editorial decisions) but they do provide a worthy stimulus for that discussion to take place.</p>
<p>Success of event against stated aims of exhibition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material? • How well did it communicate the artistic themes? • How did the event originate eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission? 	Good	<p>As conceded in the editorial, the survey is a partial one and the analyses presented in the essays are both personal and professional. The format of the magazine creates a pleasing space in which to view the work presented and to consider it in the context of the arguments presented. I craved more precise engagement between the content of the essays and/or other text, and the selected contemporary work being featured. The essays focussed on a critique of the 1979 <i>Three</i></p>

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Education events – see ¹ below for definition		<p><i>Perspectives</i> exhibition, subsequent survey exhibitions, and an analysis of the impact of external factors on photographic publishing and practice in general. All three were interesting and informative perspectives and will undoubtedly contribute to the continuing history of photography but I wanted something more directly to summarize the significance of these particular artist photographers in the development of contemporary practice and why they were invited to contribute to a survey of the state of photography in 2009. I did subsequently use the artists' list at the back of the publication to research their work and artistic statements individually via their own or gallery websites, but a brief hook on these lines for each artist within the publication would initially have been immensely helpful to grasping the thesis underpinning this edition.</p>
Quality of Public Engagement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of space and overall layout/hang? • What interpretation or support materials were available? • Were labels/maps available and how appropriate were they? • Was a Visitor Book available or opportunities for audiences to comment/interact? What were the comments like overall? • What activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info? 	Good	<p>In the context of evaluating a publication rather than an event in a public space or gallery:- The format, presentation, and quality of the publication is immediately visually engaging. It looks, feels, and smells pleasing. The editorial introduction gives a good guide to what to expect from the publication and how to use it. Portfolio is well known as a professional publication among those who already engage with contemporary photography and photographic publishing. The target audience comprises "students, teachers, photographers, artists, designers, and anyone with an interest in creative photography and visual art." It might possibly extend its audience of interest a little further with unobtrusive additions to the interpretive and explanatory information underpinning the visual offer.</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.

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																
Location and suitability of the venue for the event <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route? Are the spaces clean? How suitable was it for the exhibition? 	N/A																
Information/ interpretive material at venue <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? Is there information on the venue's website? 	N/A																
Publicity/ pre-publicity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in? What publicity materials are produced? Is it easy to understand/appropriate to the intended audience? Where can you get the information? Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding²? <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>The publication is available from the website and on subscription. It is highly visible on the magazine shelves of major booksellers and in gallery bookshops.</p> <p>There is acknowledgement on the contents page of the publication of Scottish Arts Council funding.</p>																
Signage and signposting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is the entrance clearly marked? Is there clear internal directional signage? Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops? 	N/A																
Access and provision for disabled people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event <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	
	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															
Customer service <ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the quality and 																	

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.

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.