



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: William Smith

Venue: Project Ability Gallery 2: Trongate Studios Gallery

Title of Event: Trams and Tracks

Type of Event: Exhibition

Date of Visit: 27 / 06 / 08

Overall Rating: 3 – Competent

This was a good exhibition produced by an artist who has received specialist visual arts training in a supportive environment. Trongate Studios, is lively, engaging and undertakes a very active role part of Project Ability.

Name: Helen Cadwallader Date: 26/01/09

Specialist Advisor Visual Arts 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 | 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. | 3 | <p>'Trams and Tracks', was a nine week solo exhibition of recently produced paintings by William Smith, a Trongate Studios artist. The paintings were based on memories of a bygone era of Glasgow, focusing on how old technologies, from the tram system to coal fuel, featured in the cityscape through urban design and the working lives of others.</p> <p>This subject-matter was explored through a stylised, representational, quasi-modern approach. A focus was placed on capturing the fleeting moment reminiscent of the Post-Impressionists. This was a point of reference made by the artist in his written statement.</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> | 4 | <p>This exhibition was initiated and produced by Trongate Studios Art Project part of Project Ability. William Smith is one of 80 artists facilitated and supported by Trongate Studios through its open access workshop and studio programme.</p> <p>This exhibition is informed by the main aim of Project Ability, 'to work with children and adults with learning disability, people with mental health issues and others who find it difficult to access mainstream activities'. The workshops, studio programme and associated gallery space provided by Trongate Studios creates a context designed to encourage, '...people to develop new skills and take part in local, national and international arts events.'</p> <p>The exhibition demonstrates the competent skills and much focused approach developed by William Smith through time spent at Trongate Studios. The gallery provided the opportunity to present the final work.</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> | 3 | <p>This exhibition demonstrated the general aim of the organisation to facilitate, support and present the work of artists using the Trongate Studios.</p> <p>The only specific aims for the exhibition can be referenced to the artists' statement in the accompanying leaflet and his intention to, 'look(s) back at old Glasgow...(and) recall...views of tramcars...and the old dunnies...'</p> <p>Given the above, the exhibition was successful.</p> |
| 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> | 3/4 | <p>William Smith demonstrates competent technical skills and a committed approach to exploring his subject-matter. He has produced atmospheric work which, on occasions, was highly effective in drawing the viewer into the pictorial space.</p> <p>Formally, the work demonstrated competent technical skills both through the application of paint and also the arrangement of the picture plane. There was a tendency</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 |
|----------------|---|--------|--|
| | | | to flatten out and foreshorten the scenes depicted. This was reminiscent, again, of the Post-Impressionists but also of the distinctive work and style produced by LS Lowry. Similarly, the use of a restricted, often, grey / whitened tonal range and the thick layering of paint referenced LS Lowry and the English school of inter/post-war modernism. This approach was effective in creating a highly atmospheric sense of place. |
| Dance, Theatre | Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc | | |
| Theatre | Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed. | | |
| Theatre, Dance | Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation. | | |
| Dance, Theatre | Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production. | | |
| 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 | <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> | 4 | This exhibition comprised of 18 paintings ranging from small to medium scaled work. The paintings worked well within the relatively small space of the Trongate Gallery. This was a conventional hang with the work positioned in relation, mostly, to the eye line of the height of the average visitor. Paintings were grouped in terms of shared subject matter with contrast created between works through the surface level of colour and form. Arguably this style of presentation reflected the relatively conservative nature of the painting style. |
| 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> | | My visit to Trongate Studio took place between 10.30am and 12midday on a Friday morning. During this time there were no other visitors to the exhibition. Visitor's comments were supportive of the work. |

| Artform | Criteria | Rating | Comments and key reasons for rating |
|---------|--|--------|---|
| 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. | 3 | <p>To my knowledge there were no additional interpretative activities accompanying this specific exhibition.</p> <p>However, Project Ability provides ongoing open access facilities and specific workshop programmes targeting its core constituency audiences. During my visit I witnessed a lively group workshop and saw many of the studio spaces were occupied.</p> |
| 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>This event is informed by the main aims of Trongate Studios part of Project Ability in providing specialist visual arts training and supporting the development of those whose access to mainstream facilities is restricted. The gallery space was adequately suited to the presentation of the work by providing good ceiling height and reasonable lighting conditions. Specialist access was very well provided for.</p> |
| Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc. | <p>Information and interpretative material at the venue comprised a medium-scale information panel and a free A4 sized information leaflet. The information panel was positioned at just below the average eye line height in a type-face formatted to a relatively large-size designed for ease of reading for the visually impaired. The information leaflet carried two small full-colour images of the artists' work, a title list with prices and an artist's statement along with basic information such as opening times. Again, the font and type-face used was simple and appropriately scaled at 12point fulfilling the DDA (Disability Discrimination Act) requirements for legibility. The style of writing used for both the panel and leaflet was simple, clear and concrete, again facilitating comprehension. Both the style of presentation and quality of information used was well suited to constituencies new to or developing an understanding of the visual arts and demonstrated good professional practice. The organisation had made a considered effort to communicate clearly and legibly with its audiences.</p> <p>The reception area was a permanent resource space presenting other relevant publications and general information including newsprint coverage. This was a lively engaging space with a small presentation of applied arts goods for sale along with postcards and other visual ephemera.</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>The exhibition was promoted on Project Ability's own website and publicity platforms. An A5 sized private view card had been produced with a full colour image of a William Smith painting. Exhibitions are presented as 'current' until archived. Details on the William Smith presentation were easy to find and contained all useful information including a link to the artists own page part of the 'Trongate Artists' section of the site carrying full-colour illustrations of his work. The Project Ability website is very easy to navigate. Both the menu bar on the left hand side of the page and the organisational name with address along the top of the screen are on permanent display throughout site navigation. This makes for very simple and straightforward movement through the site. Although I noted that once in 'Trongate Studio's' in the 'About Us' section of the site it was not possible to move back to the home page.</p> <p>The design is clear and legible with a simple typeface appropriately scaled to meet the DDA guidelines. There is a good balance between white 'page' space, text and images. The website communicates clearly that Project Ability is a lively and engaging organisation encompassing a wide range of related activities.</p> |
| Ease of booking and payment | NA |
| Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route? | <p>Project Ability is located on Albion Street on the edge of the designated cultural quarter of Glasgow. Although, arguably, there is less footfall of passersby on the section of street where the organisation is currently located.</p> <p>However, it is in within easy access to transport routes and the relaxed milieu of the cultural quarter and for this, Project Ability is currently adequately</p> |

| Criteria | Comment |
|--|--|
| | located. |
| External signage and signposting | Project Ability is not easy to find with poor visibility at street level. The lack of side-on signage or a street based A frame means the sign that is positioned alongside the front door is not easy to see when walking down the street. Greater street-level visibility through more dominant visible signage could be introduced to encourage passers-by to drop in and build up non-specialist audiences. |
| Internal directional signage | Internal directional signage within the shared building was generally well thought through. The signage in the shared entrance hall and within the elevator clearly signalled that Project Ability was located on the third floor. The two parts of the organisation, Project Ability and Trongate Studios, are split at opposite ends of the third floor. There is signage on the respective doors in the form of large-scale posters. However, it was a little disorientating on first leaving the elevator to clearly distinguish the split corridor sitting of the organisation. |
| Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see? | A disabled ramp leads from street level to the main entrance of the large scale former nineteenth century office/warehouse building. A capacious elevator with an automated voice prompt provides excellent disabled access and direction from the communal entrance hall up to Project Ability on the third floor. Further provision for those with visual impairments was made through the use of Braille signage within the elevator. The hallways were wide from the general entrance through to those within the Project Ability facility, thereby facilitating wheelchair access. Within Project Ability and Trongate Studios, signage varied in height and included positions sited to below average eye level, thereby catering for the needs of those in wheelchairs. |
| Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? | This was a nine-week exhibition. Normal hours are 10am to 5pm with daily opening from Monday to Friday. These are very reasonable hours of access for such a specialist organisation providing training programmes and facilities. Arguably, the lack of Saturday opening militates against the possibility of developing audiences beyond specialist constituencies. However, the sighting of both Galleries as part of open plan facilities does not allow for this as an option. |
| Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering) | Excellent. All the staff were warm, friendly, welcoming and well informed. |
| Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ² | The Scottish Arts Council logo and funding support was clearly and prominently acknowledged on all printed material throughout the organisation. This also included the highly visible positioning of the logo on the external signage through to the posters on the doors leading into both Trongate Studios and Project Ability. Both the private view card and free A4 information leaflet accompanying the William Smith exhibition had the Scottish Arts Council logo clearly positioned under 'funding support'. This was also repeated on the general full-colour A5 fold-down leaflet describing the organisation and its facilities. Again, on the website, the Scottish Arts Council logo is prominently displayed in the funding section. |

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.