



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:	Group Show
Venue:	Leith Hall Garden, NTS
Title of Event :	A Garden Tale
Type of Event:	Exhibition
Date of Visit:	30.5.2009 (exhibition runs until end August 2009)
Overall Rating:	Very Good

This was a group exhibition within the gardens of Leith Hall, Huntly, Aberdeenshire. The exhibition was initiated by Toby Loveday (head gardener at Leith Hall) and developed through a collaborative partnership between the nearby, Scottish Sculpture Workshop. This was the second exhibition held in the garden, the first being in 2007.

7 artists were selected to develop ideas and produce new work that responded to the site at Leith Hall Garden. As a result of this site-specific approach, art-work was produced that employed a wide range of media that engaged with the history and context of the gardens. Work included sculpture, temporary architecture, print, video and sound works.

The work and interventions in the garden were slowly discovered and unfolded as a visitor walked through the grounds of the garden. Work was sensitively and thoughtfully installed and visitors were clearly intrigued and engaged with the work.

A booklet was produced to accompany the exhibition where each artists practice was represented as well as other information relating to the gardens and a map to locate each of the artworks.

A range of talks and activities accompany the exhibition, including artist talks and outreach to local schools.

Name: Steve Hollingsworth	Date: 6.6.209
Scottish Arts Council Officer	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 	Good	<p>The 7 artists selected to respond to the site at Leith hall gardens all had differing strategies in developing interesting pieces. Researching the site as a means to develop ideas, work didn't take an obvious botanical route but used the natural context as a platform to unearth and reference the hidden narratives and histories of the site in engaging ways. Themes of time, cycles of nature and the unseen seemed to be broadly at the fore of much of the work. Either in the Ballardian, remote sculptural text pieces of Michael Stumpf or in the 13 monitor video installation of Fergus and Kelly Connor. This piece, in the stable block, used a singular video image of a frozen pond as a metaphor for fragility and time and as a way to interrogate the connections of needlepoint/craft/community attached to the Leith Hall. The range of practices complimented each other well, with some emerging and more established artists providing interesting links and slippages between meanings of the works.</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>Artists selected all had a connection through the Scottish sculpture workshop either through a previous residency opportunity or having made work there in the past. This previous relationship with SSW enabled an informed and appropriate choice in bringing suitable practices to bear on the possibilities at Leith Hall Garden. SSW offered selected artists technical support and encouraged them to be as ambitious as possible in developing ideas with this technical and practical assistance in 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? <p>Education events – see ¹below for definition</p>	Very good	<p>The exhibition relates exactly to how it is represented in both the printed booklet which was available free to all visitors and the web-site information on the NTS and SSW web-sites.</p> <p>http://www.nts.org.uk/Property/42/News/536/</p> <p>http://www.ssw.org.uk/?c=1&act=story&tgt=573.</p> <p>The information presented in the booklet allowed an accessible and interesting platform from which to access the individual artists ideas and the hopes and ambitions for the show of SSW and NTS. The event originated from Toby Loveday (head gardener) approaching SSW to initiate a collaborative project. Although I wasn't present, I was aware there were artist led talks around the gardens on the opening weekend of 30/31st May. As well as this further outreach involved the pupils of Inverurie Academy who were involved in a workshop regarding site-specificity on the 3rd June. The show runs until the end of August, no doubt other interpretation events are planned.</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.

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
<p>Quality of Public Engagement</p> <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? 	<p>Good</p>	<p>Quality of public engagement was/is good. Interpretation was provided in the form of an accessible and free exhibition booklet-this included a map of the gardens and location of artworks.</p> <p>I wasn't aware of a visitors' book although visitors I saw were clearly enjoying engaging with the work and spent time with each art-work.</p> <p>As above, artist led talks were scheduled together with events with local schools.</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?

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? 	<p>Although relatively remote, the information on the NTS website was readily available and made the venue easy to find. If using public transport there is a bus service and a train station at Huntly. Yes, the spaces/gardens were well kept. It is a very suitable venue for contemporary work.</p>																
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? 	<p>There were posters and the exhibition booklet was available at the venue entrance and also within the garden. There is information on both the SSW and NTS websites.</p>																
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 event is mentioned in the list-http://www.list.co.uk/event/181538-a-garden-tale/ And Sorcha Dallas gallery who represents Michael Stumpf http://www.sorchadallas.com/exhibitions/1399</p> <p>The exhibition booklet was thorough and provided very accessible information on the artists in the exhibition and provided interesting information regarding the history of the site and also the intentions of SSW and NTS in regard to the show.</p> <p>Yes, there was acknowledgement of SAC funding on all publicity.</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? 	<p>The entrance was clearly marked, the map within the exhibition booklet made the site easily navigable. There was no Braille signage I was aware of, but as some of the work was audio based this work especially was readily accessible by visually impaired people.</p>																
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>no</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td>no</td> <td>Lift/ramp</td> <td>no</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accessible toilets</td> <td>In the main building</td> <td>Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td>no</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation		Audio description	no	Captioning	no	Lift/ramp	no	Accessible toilets	In the main building	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	no
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Customer service	<p>Everyone I spoke to, including artists, staff and NTS volunteers where</p>																

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
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How was the quality and efficiency of staff (invigilators etc) • If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers? 	<p>extremely helpful and courteous.</p>

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.