



### 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:** Stammer Productions/ Colette Sadler

**Venue:** Tramway, Glasgow

**Title of Event :** The Making of Doubt

**Type of Event:** Dance performance

**Date of Visit:** Friday 9 May 2008

**Overall Rating:** 3

This is an original and edgy piece of dance-theatre with some strong ideas at its core. Casting life-sized 'dolls' alongside real performers to explore notions of 'real' vs 'fake' and 'alien' or 'hybrid bodies', it is boldly programmed; well performed, and to some degree, well conceived. However it is inconsistent and at times esoteric so became alienating. Clearly the result of hard work and careful nurturing: it has promise but does not currently consistently deliver.

**Name:** Ellie Carr

**Date:** 29.05.08

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 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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
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| 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>This is an original, and at times, thought-provoking piece of dance-theatre by established artist Colette Sadler. Its main strength lies in the casting of two eerie life-sized crash-test dummy-style 'dolls' alongside four real performers. Using the faceless dolls as stand-in humans Sadler seems to be exploring notions of dispossession; of belonging or not belonging to society; and also raises questions as to what in our environment is 'real' and what is 'fake'. In an era of reality TV, selective media and Facebook-type communications this seems pertinent.</p> <p>This vision is effective in some places; less so in others. The opening scene creates the strongest stage pictures and communicates Sadler's ideas best. Apparently partly inspired (according to media interviews) by youths hanging around her locality -- she dresses performers and puppets in identical 'hoodies'. Slumping and slouching round stage; manipulated into movement by the real performers it is hard to tell human and doll apart. Before long the performers have adopted the body language of their puppet counterparts: they are as lifeless and disconnected as each other. All have become the 'hybrid bodies' Sadler talks about.</p> <p>The second interesting thread is the use of the dolls' limbs as prosthetics. Detached from the dolls these are left strewn around stage before being re-attached (under clothing) to the performers</p> <p>What follows feels a bit like a freak show. One dancer has three legs – but which is the fake? Another is being strangled by a third hand creeping up around her neck. It is diverting and reasonably well-executed; but after a few minutes feels tangential. It also throws up themes the choreographer may not have intended. Issues of human embryology, genetic mutation, birth defects are hard to avoid when faced with these freak figures. Here the central ideas of the piece become confusing. Are we talking about dispossession? Or something completely different? It is the audience's turn to feel a little alienated.</p> <p>Other material involving (for example) spoken text, masking tape and cardboard screens seem to be padding out an already short work; the overall effect being one of inconsistency.</p> |

| Artform              | Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Rating | Comments and key reasons for rating                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| All<br>(if relevant) | <p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <p>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> | 3      | <p>The Making of Doubt is the culmination of a sustained development project and collaboration between Tramway and Sadler. This nurturing of artists is something Tramway is very good at and it is an important role – even where works are not 100% successful. The work is a co-production and has been created through residencies in Belgium and Germany as well as Scotland. This brings international ideas to the Tramway stage and reflects the fact Sadler is now part-based in Berlin. This cultivation of the artist and development of the work across different European centres seems very healthy – as long as the end product and audience are kept in view.</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 <sup>1</sup>below for guidance</p>                                                                  | 2      | <p>As stated in the single sheet A4 Tramway programme Sadler's broad aim is to 'push at the edges of our perceptions of what constitutes choreographic movement'. This she achieves, using non-traditional dance vocabulary (ie not aligned to any established technique) and embracing wider physical theatre methods to create work. More specifically Sadler aims here to 'explore the realm between what is real and what is simulation' and pose the question 'what happens when we mimic the movements of objects which are designed to mimic us?' This she does with some success.</p> <p>Other statements are more esoteric. We are asked to consider 'how we integrate the notion of this 'impossible spectral body' as an alien presence within society' and (in the full-colour pre-publicity A5 flier) invited to witness a 'work substituting the real with the fake [which] opens a play between human and doll towards the production of alien bodies'. It's hard language to penetrate and does not help the audience engage with the work.</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>                                                                                         | 4      | <p>The four performers are all well-trained and suitable for this type of work. They have good acting skills and bring a certain intensity to the piece. They have the right physicality and un-mannered movement and use puppets and props with skill and ease. They seem well-versed in Sadler's movement philosophy and to understand her intentions well.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| Dance, Theatre       | <p>Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc</p>                                                                                                                                                            | 3      | <p>The choreography is original and drawn directly from the subject matter. Sadler uses the 'dead weight' quality and undirected movement of dolls to create a unique vocabulary. There's an awkward, almost anti-dance feel to some of the longer sequences with jarring limbs; broken 'lines'; locked-out joints. It chimes with the themes but whether it</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

<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.

| Artform        | Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | Rating | Comments and key reasons for rating                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
|----------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |        | is effective will come down to personal taste. The prosthetic limbs are quite well used and incorporated into the material but do seem to make a bigger and more dominant statement than intended. The blank canvas of the Tramway space is fully utilised and filled with just four dancers. The props are well incorporated; the dolls giving the impression of a bigger cast. The duration is short at 43 minutes but there is only just enough material to fill the time as it is.                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             | 2      | The piece is presented to high professional standards and cast well. However the direction and clarity of ideas is not consistent throughout.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
| Dance, Theatre | Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           | 3      | The music is a soundtrack by largely anonymous Newcastle based band/collective Zoviet*France. It is light-industrial/ambient: acting more as aural backdrop than driving feature. At times it is little more than electronic distortion fed through speakers (on stage and at one point under the front row of seats). It is appropriate music that adds to and complements the bleak feel of the work. However it is described as a 'live' soundtrack which seems like an oxymoron. There may have been 'live' mixing using a sound desk and/or decks but this was not obvious to the audience. Unless it's a very clever play on the idea of real vs fake the term 'live' seems misleading. |
| 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                              | 3      | The costumes are largely street clothing; the set rudimentary; lighting naturalistic. It is unremarkable but appropriate to the piece and allows choreography and performances to stand out. Tramway audiences are used to this stripped-back type of presentation so it is appropriate to the venue.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| 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</p> | 4      | The lighting and sound cues etc were apparently flawless and there were no technical hitches that were obvious to the audience on the night.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |

| Artform | Criteria                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | Rating | Comments and key reasons for rating                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
|         | of participant group and activity, including genre.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |        |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| All     | <p><b>Audience</b></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> |        | <p>This fairly experimental type of dance-theatre is something predominantly young and relatively open-minded Tramway audiences are used to. It is the most appropriate audience for the work. On the night I attended the auditorium seemed about two-thirds full. There were many other artists and those connected with the Scottish/Glasgow arts scene and the work seemed to receive a reasonably warm and positive response.</p> |
| All     | <p><b>Additional Interpretative activity</b> – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | -      | <p>I wasn't made aware of any additional supporting activities although I am aware Tramway often runs events of this kind. There was no mention of any activities on the venue website, the pre-publicity fliers or the programme itself.</p>                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| All     | <p><b>Outcomes of education activity</b> – 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                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        | Tramway is a big, spacious venue with a definite atmosphere. Once in the building you are drawn into the central hall via displays and the bar/café where there is an air of expectation for the event ahead. There are often parallel exhibitions and events running and as such there is a creative buzz which makes it very suitable for new, edgy work.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.                                                                                                                                                                                                       | With full-colour fliers laid out at the box office it was possible to pick up extra material whilst collecting tickets (this was useful coming through from Edinburgh). Programmes are minimalist (one sheet A4) but ushers made sure you had one as you left the box office. Press cuttings were displayed opposite the box office – although I didn't spot these until after the event.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| 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. | The Tramway website is a good source of information and easy to navigate. Living in Edinburgh I saw no other pre-publicity in the form of leaflets, posters or any other medium. I saw articles in the Scottish press and heard an interview on Radio Scotland's The Radio Café. Stammer Productions' [Colette Sadler's] website has useful background on company and past work but is fairly rudimentary and the text not very well written. As I don't live in Glasgow I am unable to comment on how well the show was advertised there.                                                    |
| Ease of booking and payment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   | I booked over the phone which was easy and straightforward. However an online booking system would be useful. I collected tickets just prior to the show which proved quick and easy.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?                                                                                                                                                                                                   | Travelling from Edinburgh to Glasgow is made easy by the frequency of trains. However onward travel from Queen Street is less straightforward. The overground train is from Central Station not Queen Street, the nearest underground station is a good walk away and you wouldn't tackle the buses unless you knew the routes well. Travelling alone on a Friday night I chose a taxi as the area around Tramway is a little desolate and off-putting for a lone female. Tramway does feel out of the way and whilst a great venue the location does seem a barrier to audience development. |
| External signage and signposting                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              | External signage for Tramway is well below standard. The main sign above the door is only visible as you draw up outside and the only other signage is a small lopsided sign hanging off a lamppost outside. I couldn't see any signs indicating where to turn off into Albert Drive.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Internal directional signage                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Internal signage is much better with auditoria, bar/café, toilets all well-marked.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |

| Criteria                                                                                                                 | Comment                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
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| Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?                                                             | Access to Tramway is through automatic doors leading straight into the main building, toilets and café. The Making of Doubt was on the ground floor in Tramway 1 so no access problem there. The website explains that Tramway has been a fully accessible space since work completed in 2000 and that there is an infra red system for audio description and sound amplification if required.                            |
| Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience? | The start time of Making of Doubt was 8pm on Friday and Saturday night. This is the ‘traditional’ start time for both Tramway and smaller arts venues and one audiences are used to. As pieces are often shorter (ie one hour) than larger theatres it also means the evening doesn’t finish too early. The shorter length and early-ish finish time means the largely younger and sociable audience can go on elsewhere. |
| Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)                | On the night I attended box office, FOH and bar/café staff were all friendly and efficient. There was however no-one manning the box office at the end when a few audience members required help booking taxis. Given the venue’s location this would seem essential.                                                                                                                                                     |
| Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>                                                            | The SAC logo was present on all publicity materials I saw but was extremely small on the A4 Tramway programme and had text running to two lines (as if compressed to fit the design) on the full-colour A5 Tramway flier.                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

<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.

### **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.