

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:	Elin Jacobsdottir		
Venue:	Stills Gallery		
Title of Event :	Hinges Between Days		
Type of Event:	<i>Exhibition</i>		
Date of Visit:	13 December 2009		
Overall Rating:	very good		
<i>(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – i.e. 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:	Mary Doyle	Date:	13 February 2010
Scottish Arts Council Officer		Specialist Advisor x	

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 	<p>Very good</p>	<p>Jakobsdóttir's work combines drawing, paper cut-outs, sculptural objects and films shot in 16mm and Super-8. This was Jacobsdottir's first solo exhibition in Scotland and the UK. I had not seen this artist's work before.</p> <p><i>Janus</i> comprised 24 black and white photographs of parks, streets and graveyards with the occasional person randomly appearing in the shot. The works were buttressed like a filmstrip to be read sequentially - like the figure of Janus, the images have no beginning or end.</p> <p>Of the two films in the back gallery, the larger of the short films <i>Horsebox</i>, follows two men in a workshop constructing a coffin-like wooden structure with legs. Once its constructed the men lift it up and carry it around the streets of Berlin. At various stages the structure's put down and one of the men climbs inside to lie down or peer through an large opening providing us a periscope view. The film is shot from varying angles giving a different perspective of how the structure contains the figure. This performance of a ridiculous situation is repeated with the other man taking his turn to negotiate the space in and around the structure and momentarily become one with it. Once this ritual is over, the box is finally dismantled in the street and the film starts over again with its construction. The film is funny, odd and nonsensical. Rather like Brechtian theatre the audience is in effect alienated from its meaning whilst the actors interaction with the structure suggests the changing form of the object. It also refers to art happenings of the 1970s where the the body was used to negotiate obstacles and spaces, often within an exterior landscape.</p> <p>The props for the films are displayed in the front gallery. <i>Two-sided Table</i>, 2008 is based on a library desk where people sit opposite hidden from each other's view. A black paper-cut-out of an organic cell-like shape seeps across each side of the table. The table also appears in the film <i>Worktable</i>, which is presented as a floor-mounted wooden double-sided screen. The film begins with a young boy seated on one side of the table loosely drawing the floor plan of an internal space of a building. One is not sure if this is an imaginary space or whether he is recording the memory of a particular place. On the other side of the projection sits the same boy, now an adolescent, facing an elderly man who makes a more architecturally exact plan using a ruler to draw out the floor plan, doors, windows, stairs, tables and chairs etc. Each</p>

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
		<p>draws without awareness of the other. The film suggests an experiment is been undertaken over time to explore the intersection between reality and imagination. Are we seeing the same person recalling the memory of a significant place or is this the working of the imagination?</p> <p>In another section of the film a young child cuts out balloon-like shapes from fabric – this is then placed over the head of a seated woman who is then stitched into her chair. The film leads on to a young child creating a cat’s cradle out of string using the four legs of an overturned table. At different intervals two people walk down a set of stairs to the outside where they appear to describe with their hands the scale of an invisible object. The use of documentary technique in these films is at odds with the seemingly random acts that have no significant purpose. They are curiously engaging and disturbingly resonant of early films of psychological experiments in human behaviour. Jacobsdottir’s films explore the fine line between the unfathomable subconscious, memory and reality.</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>Stills gallery consistently present a strong programme of lens based work and moving image. Stills specialise in photography yet explore the expanded practice of photography supporting the work of new young artists from within and outside Scotland. This artist has made full use of the residency to make a powerful number of works.</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>Jacobsdottir took part in the Stills residency programme. This allowed the artist to experiment with different techniques and processes in Stills darkroom and digital facilities towards making new work for the exhibition. The exhibition included existing works alongside three new commissions Horsebox, Work Table and Janus. The result of the residency is an ambitious body of work.</p>
<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 	Very good	<p>In the front gallery. Janus, 2009 suite of 24 photographs was displayed as a continuous run around two walls. Alongside, were sculptural works that featured as props in the films. The unusual set-up of a low double-sided screen between opposing pairs of seats echoed the set up in the film <i>Worktable</i>. The display also meant you interacted with other visitors and the performative nature of</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>comments like overall?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info? 		<p>the film.</p> <p>The gallery provided a handout with a short text and a list of the works.</p> <p>Specific events linked to the exhibition included:</p> <p>Saturday, 13 March 2010 Film Study Day and Hinges Between Days For the closing event of the exhibition, Stills invited curators, academics and artists to explore the intersection of the imaginative and the poetic in artists' film. To mark the launch of her new book, Elín Jakobsdóttir was also in conversation with the curator of the exhibition, Kirsten Lloyd. This event was post my visit.</p> <p>Stills have teamed up with Collective gallery to offer free exhibition tours on Sundays</p> <p>I didn't view the Visitors book.</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																
<p>Location and suitability of the venue for the event</p> <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>Stills Gallery is in a prominent position within the centre of Edinburgh and in close proximity to Waverley station. The gallery is always well presented. The two galleries are purposely adapted for showing photography and the back gallery space is adaptable as a darkened space for projection.</p>																
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event? Is there information on the venue's website? 	<p>The website is clear, informative and easily accessible. Sponsors and funders are clearly acknowledged.</p>																
<p>Publicity/ pre-publicity</p> <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>Publicity materials include a press release, an A4 folded handout sheet with text and list of works and an invitation card with image with the same text as the handout - it would be helpful to have the text made slightly larger. The Scottish Arts Council logo is acknowledged on all exhibition material, alongside other exhibition funding bodies and sponsors.</p>																
<p>Signage and signposting</p> <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 is clearly marked and a board indicates the gallery on the pavement outside. Exhibition is clearly indicated within the gallery. I'm unsure if braille audio loops were available?</p>																
<p>Access and provision for disabled people</p> <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>Not sure</td> <td>Audio description</td> <td>Not sure</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td>Yes On handout</td> <td>Lift/ramp</td> <td>yes</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accessible toilets</td> <td>Yes</td> <td>Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td>yes</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation	Not sure	Audio description	Not sure	Captioning	Yes On handout	Lift/ramp	yes	Accessible toilets	Yes	Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	yes
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<p>Customer service</p> <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>I was greeted by the invigilator and offered a handout that gave background information to the project and listed the works. Staff are always helpful and friendly.</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

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.