



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: STREETLEVEL PHOTOWORKS

Venue: KING STREET, GLASGOW

Title of Event: 'UNIMPROVED'

Type of Event: EXHIBITION

Date of Visit: SATURDAY 18TH AUGUST 2007

Overall Rating: 4

The exhibition and publication are part of a series of exhibitions of new works that are being commissioned and/or featured by Street Level Photoworks whilst development is underway for TRONGATE 103.

The project offered the opportunity to redefine how two Glasgow-based artists - Alan Dimmick & Steve McQueen - and their work are perceived, attracting a range of different audiences.

The exhibition was imaginatively presented with clear accompanying interpretative material freely available.

Name: SUSAN CHRISTIE

Date: 25th SEPTEMBER 2007

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
All	Vision and imagination of work	4	<p>“Unimproved”, a two person show curated for Street Level Photoworks by Karen Vaughan, presented new & archival work by Glasgow-based artists Alan Dimmick and Steve McQueen.</p> <p>Whilst Alan Dimmick is a familiar documenter of other people’s work, he is not as widely known as an exhibiting artist. This show offered the opportunity to redefine how both artists and their work are perceived.</p> <p>At present development work is underway for partnership initiative TRONGATE 103, and this exhibition was initiated as part of a series of short exhibitions. TRONGATE 103 is not scheduled to be completed and open to the public until 2009.</p> <p>Both artists have local/arts connections and networks that converged to draw wider audiences to Street Level.</p> <p>As part of the project, a hand-drawn map by Laura Michael was commissioned. This was the one of the first visual components of the show that visitors encountered on entering the space. This work was reproduced (& folded similarly to a traditional map) and was freely available providing an engaging and entertaining perspective on the artists’ special areas of interest and preoccupations. Text & illustrations provided a light-hearted insight into the artists’ process and research eg. ‘Steve and Alan share an unease with small boats which has possibly prevented them from visiting some of the smaller bird-infested islands.’</p> <p>One gallery wall was covered with Dimmick’s small black and white photographs. These provided an fascinating glimpse into numerous artistic encounters, social gatherings, family and friends of the artist spanning a period of several decades. Some featured familiar faces from the Scottish arts world, whilst others were intriguing and clearly had a story behind them – beach trips, costumed performers playing in a band, etc.</p> <p>Colour photographs and two looped films by Steve McQueen focused on birds and other wildlife that require patience and perseverance to uncover. One film featured the grasshopper warbler, a bird that is <i>heard but rarely seen</i>. This phrase encapsulated something of both artists’ practice – developing a creative response that emerges out of a period of quiet & often hidden observation.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection	4	<p>This exhibition and publication are part of a series of new work that is being commissioned or exhibited whilst development is underway TRONGATE 103.</p> <p>This was the first public showing of Dimmick's work in 20 years and offered the wider public the opportunity to see part of much larger collection.</p> <p>McQueen's work demonstrated his sensitivity and particular way of observing and documenting the natural and built environment.</p> <p>The range of media (films, wall of miniature black and white photos, larger images presented in pairs and the illustrated map offered a quietly immersing experience for the visitor.</p> <p>The artist's work worked well as a combination since there were similarities in their interests and they way that they approach their work.</p>
All	Success of event	4	<p>Artists' talks were co-ordinated as part of the project and attracted approx a dozen attendees which was a respectable, rather than spectacular, turn-out. Larger numbers might have been anticipated and it would be useful to explore why there was not a larger uptake for the talks.</p> <p>Range of people – from schools, photographic groups, etc – that visited the exhibition was broad and the artists' wider connections ensured that a varied audience interacted with the work. This was significant aspect of the project, attracting different audiences who may not be regular visitors to Street Level.</p> <p>The print specially designed for the show successfully communicated the themes and preoccupations of the artists in an imaginative format.</p>
All	Performers/tutors	4	Technically, the work was professionally produced and imaginatively presented.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography		N/A
Theatre	Script		N/A
Theatre, Dance	Direction		N/A
Dance, Theatre	Use of music		N/A
Dance, Theatre	Design		N/A

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	Quality of Presentation/Engagement	4	<p>The exhibition was professionally presented, with clear interpretation and made positive use of the space.</p> <p>Creating a wall of photographs accentuated Dimmick's propensity to collect and hoard images.</p> <p>Each of the differing elements within the exhibition were afforded their own space which broke up the gallery and enabled the audience to fully engage with the range of work in the show.</p>
All	Audience	4	<p>The scale and intimacy of Dimmick's photo-wall demanded time and concentration to examine the images in depth.</p> <p>During my visit, other members of the public were taking time to engage with the work and give varying elements of the show their concentration which the work required. Similarly, McQueen's films were gently paced and needed time to absorb.</p> <p>The exhibition run was extended to tie in with the Merchant City Festival and this provided a wider platform and audience through the festival's publicity and promotion programme.</p>
All	Additional Interpretative activity	4	<p>Information was freely available on arrival in the gallery - an A4 sheet and colour map/brochure.</p> <p>Informal artists' talks were promoted and scheduled to take place half-way through the exhibition's run.</p>
All	Outcomes of education	3	<p>The education activity – an informal tour and talk by the artists on 1st Sept – was not as well attended as might have been anticipated. It would be useful to explore the possible reasons for this.</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? **There are Equalities¹ issues with several boxes eg signage, interpretation, ease of booking and publicity. Do they publicise Stagertext / BSL interpreted performances? What provision is there for visually impaired people? Is the interpretation intellectually accessible (available in Easy English)?**

Criteria	Comment
Suitability of the venue for the event	The venue was suitable for the show.
Information/ interpretive material at venue	Interpretative material was freely available with the language pitched at a wide audience.
Publicity/ pre-publicity	Information about the exhibition and Street Level was easily accessed via various websites and published listings.
Ease of booking and payment	N/A
Location of venue	Location is central and can be accessed by foot from the city centre and within easy reach of the bus station, train stations, etc.
External signage and signposting	<p>Signage and entrance to the gallery is shared with a number of organisations and is distinctly uninviting.</p> <p>The major partnership development underway will result in a new improved space for Street Level but in the interim period, there needs to be more positive signage and energy invested in making the approach to the gallery a more welcoming experience. For the first time visitor, in particular, the present environment is potentially highly off-putting.</p> <p>The external door lists various names and businesses and the galleries (GPS & SLP) are somewhat lost amongst the listings.</p> <p>Clear, well-designed and inviting signage on the street, external entrance and inside the doorway could be undertaken without great expense and would make the experience of crossing the threshold a much more positive one.</p>
Internal directional signage	Internal signage within the building could be improved. Not necessary, however, once you have entered the gallery space since layout is then obvious.
Access and provision for disabled people	<p>Lift available to first floor where gallery is located.</p> <p>Hallway dark and uninviting, as specified earlier.</p> <p>Current setting is not ideal from access perspective but new development - TRONGATE 103 - is underway and will result in new and improved facilities for SLP.</p>
Timing of the event	Timing of gallery opening times are generally Wed-Sat from 10.00 – 5.00pm. Dates of the exhibition run were extended to link in with the local Merchant City Festival.
Customer service	Did not have any contact with staff during the gallery visit but follow-up questions were thoroughly dealt with by Karen Vaughan.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	SAC acknowledged clearly on all print, listings, website, etc.

¹ For more information look at [Getting There](http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/information/publications/1003364.aspx) <http://www.scottisharts.org.uk/1/information/publications/1003364.aspx>

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,

3. Organisation's Reply (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 disparity of response between the organisation and the evaluator, 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, defamatory or inaccurate.

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. The Scottish Arts Council will require any response back within 15 working days of your receipt of this evaluation.