



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: Andrew J Ward

Venue: Taigh Chearsabhagh, North Uist

Title of Event: Bardic Voyage

Type of Event: Exhibition

Date of Visit: 17 March 2008

Overall Rating: 3 - Competent

(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.)

The centre is a vital and engaging place, with an excellent wide-ranging programme, good quality shop, café and vibrant meeting place. TC regularly providing artists with residencies in this unique location and provide a supportive atmosphere for members of the local community as well as visitors to experience challenging and traditional work, reflecting and developing the local culture. The exhibition *Bardic Voyage* was installed well and featured accessible subject matter. I felt the relationship between the artist's ideas and techniques were not fully resolved. Despite this, the exhibition is considered within the context of the overall programme at Taigh Chearsabhagh and within the overall visitor experience there.

Name: Kirsteen Macdonald

Date: 18 March 2008

Specialist Advisor

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	<p>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.</p>	3	<p>This particular series reflects the artist's interest in the tradition of the Scottish Bard, with large-scale portraits painted using his hands, depicting characters from the recent past and more historical figures.</p> <p>I haven't seen the work of the artist before and am only aware of previous work through the DVD located in the upper gallery at Taigh Chearsabhagh. This un-narrated film, which takes a poetic stylistic approach, shows the artist working on a series of large-scale charcoal landscapes on paper. He uses intuitive, visceral approaches to depict nature. There wasn't any contextual information e.g. date, place, to link it to the exhibited work.</p> <p>The working methods in this film contrast with the <i>Bardic Voyage</i> series, in which he utilises a range of graphic devises to layer abstracted patterns on the faces portrayed. From the information provided in the accompanying publication I couldn't make any clear links between these graphic interventions and the characters they portrayed, although gallery staff explained that the artist had spent a lot of research time with relatives of each subject and had developed the techniques and colours in each portrait in relationship to the people portrayed.</p> <p>Some of the stylistic/ technical devises in the work relate heavily to other artists such as Chuck Close, or further back, Pointillism. This made it difficult to obtain a clear sense of the artist's concerns for the subject. The surfaces are textured as the artist used his hands to paint onto the canvas – but the instinctive gesture shown in the earlier work is lacking here. The images are almost more coherent when reproduced digitally at a smaller scale, accentuating the graphic rather than the painterly qualities. Perhaps this is due to a process of working digitally in the compositional stages.</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>	3	<p>The exhibited work was originally conceived to hang in CalMac ferries, with two or three works on each of the ferry routes. The gallery curator felt that they weren't done justice in the way they were presented. By bringing the series together for the first time, it can be seen as a whole and the gallery space certainly provides a better context for the viewing of the work.</p> <p>The exhibition is a fairly populist one and easily accessible for wide audience. As it features figures from North Uist, and the artist is based in Ullapool, it has local relevance appropriate to the programme, and works in contrast to the concurrent residencies with Deirdre Nelson and Andy Goldsworthy.</p> <p>The exhibition replaced a residency project that has</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			been postponed to later in the year.
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>	4	The explanation on the Taigh Chearsabhagh website and in the exhibition catalogue clearly articulates the aims of the artist's project and the resulting work. The website features images from the series.
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>	N/a	
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	<p>Large-scale works fill the 2 small gallery spaces, arranged so that additional viewing range is afforded the more complex images.</p> <p>The plexiglass framing of the works made them suitable for hanging outdoors but also on the busy environment of a ferry. This framing is neat, clean and doesn't distract from the works.</p> <p>It is unfortunate that one of the works was damaged In transit. This portrait of Martyn Bennett was intended to hang outside on the gable end of the building. It would be have been interesting to see how the painting worked from a longer viewing range.</p>
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>	3	<p>Positive visitor book comments.</p> <p>The centre was busy at the time of my visit, with one visitor also wandering around the galleries. He was engaged with the work, consulting the catalogue and looking at the paintings.</p> <p>The exhibition is appropriate to the centre programme – it engages with a wide ranging audience and its surroundings.</p>
All	<p>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.</p>	4	<p>The <i>Bardic Voyage</i> publication was available to consult in the galleries and for sale. It gave an overview of the series but there was little information covering the background info on the artist, his working methods or biography.</p> <p>The creative DVD in café added life to the works on show and put them into context with the oral tradition in a way I'd like to have seen explored further in the exhibition itself.</p> <p>A documentary DVD (approx 16 mins) about the artist's previous work in the upper gallery space gave insight to</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
			<p>his earlier working methods. I would have appreciated some information to accompany this.</p> <p>During February the centre held two events in relation to the exhibition - a weekend workshop with the artist; and an evening event exploring song, music and stories in the tradition of the Bard with Dr Margaret Bennett and Anna Wendy Stevenson.</p> <p>These activities were aimed at adults.</p> <p>A free children's activity sheet was available in the upper gallery.</p>
All	<p>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)?</p>	4	<p>These events add an extra layer to the exhibition programme and the other (curriculum and non-curriculum) work undertaken by the centre - an interesting range of activities for public access to the artist to the theme of the exhibition.</p> <p>The venue is involved in a wide range of heritage and arts education work including formal Art qualification through the University of Highlands and Islands, for a wide range of ages.</p> <p>I am not aware of the specific outcomes in relation to the activities for this exhibition.</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
Suitability of the venue for the event	GOOD The two distinctive gallery spaces offer variation for the display of work The exhibition fitted well within the physical space available
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	GOOD The general venue leaflet is useful and informs of the wide range of services run by the centre. The exhibition would have benefited from a little more information than that in the exhibition catalogue.
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.	GOOD The venue has good editorial and brochure coverage locally and in the tourist sector. The exhibition is featured on gallery's website. Website is informative but the design looks basic and not all event information was up to date in advance of my visit.
Ease of booking and payment	N/a For the shop and café there are various payment methods available. Helpful front counter staff.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	EXCELLENT A unique setting near the ferry port at the north of the island, the building is distinctive and located on the main road.
External signage and signposting	EXCELLENT A distinctive coloured building and good signposting
Internal directional signage	EXCELLENT The layout of the centre makes it easy to find facilities, but these are also clearly labelled.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	GOOD Parking at front entrance, level access on ground floor to galleries, archive, café, toilets and studios. Lift access to upper gallery. It appears that the printmaking facilities are not fully accessible.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	GOOD Open 6 days a week from 10am – 5pm with events also held in evenings.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	EXCELLENT Informative, helpful and friendly staff with excellent knowledge of the area, the centre and the programme. Cafe and shop provide a good service. The centre also provides a post office and free internet access
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	SAC logo appears on all posters, leaflets, website and on plaques inside the building. Neither the publication or exhibition info credit SAC as it was produced in sponsorship with CalMac before Taigh Chearsabhagh decided to show the work.

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.