



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:	Andrew Grassie
Venue:	Talbot Rice Gallery, Edinburgh
Title of Event:	Painting as Document
Type of Event:	Exhibition
Date of Visit:	14 and 28 August 2008
Overall Rating:	4 - Good

(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.)

Summary

An exhibition of high quality and depth, of challenge in respect of interpretation with a concise, focussed selection of background material or clues to outline the artist's deeply analytical approach to his work – to stimulate thinking rather than over-explain.

It was an academic and (first) retrospective exhibition by an artist aware and needing to research and appraise the context and status of where and how his work is seen.

Issues to do with scale, time, curatorship, photographic representation, historic painting techniques, the physicality of spaces where artists work and how art can be determined and displayed form principle constructs to the exhibition.

Name: Alastair Snow
Specialist Advisor

Date: 02.10.2008

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>	Excellent	<p>This is the artist's first major solo exhibition with works selected from the last fifteen years. Miniature photo-realist paintings resemble photographs but are painted in egg tempera. An intention of his work is to question the values of art and the art world. He assembles imagined groups of artworks from gallery collections. He is curator and painter, questions his own practice and the way art works or is perceived in exhibitions as considered by the viewer, in virtual form.</p> <p>The work is entirely fictional and immaculately executed with great technical skill. Its' elegance promotes the formal nature of his compositions and his art historical interests. This brings together works by Henry Moore, George Stubbs, Turner, Rodin, in imagined (re) hangs at the Tate or of other artist's works for example at the Maureen Paley Gallery. His research and curatorial enquiries extend to the interiors of 10 Downing Street, the Government Art Collection and the office of locus+ in Newcastle.</p> <p>In earlier works made around 1993/94 his subjects range from story-board narratives of people detained at Her Majesty's pleasure to a double image of a semi-detached Scottish Holiday Home.</p> <p>These are ambiguous and engaging works, disguised, immaculate, cool observations and commentary; not too far removed from a high art and media culture aesthetic in a catalogue and colour supplement age; art reverential and a sort of academic pop.</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>	Good	<p>Grassie was born in Edinburgh and the Talbot Rice Gallery has presented this first retrospective with sharp curatorial skill to survey the development to date of a very 'individual' artist.</p> <p>The exhibition tracks and re-traces developments achieved by the artist at different points in his career. He re-visits certain themes; the anxiety and questioning quality of his approach to his work under intense scrutiny is acknowledged and deeply analytical. The formality and structure of his works is carefully devised, often mathematically to aid composition.</p> <p>This is displayed very effectively in a number of exhibition vitrines (cases) which contain drawings, photographs, letters, tracings and lay-outs of prototypes and planned works. This is a strength and major component of the exhibition.</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 ¹below for guidance</p>	Good	<p>Brief, succinct, background information is given in a list of works to complement larger panels of wall mounted text presented at the beginning of the exhibition. This outlines rather than over-explains, which suits the main tenet of the installation – i.e. to put on <i>an exhibition that is more than the sum of its parts</i>.</p> <p>'Key facts about the exhibition' are included in a printed insert within the exhibition programme. It anticipates and answers the most frequently asked questions likely to arise from visitors to the exhibitions. For example: <i>The paintings are taken from the artist's own photographs of other works of art, gallery or other interiors and virtual exhibitions.</i> <i>It takes approximately three months for Andrew Grassie to complete a painting, he does not work with a magnifying glass.</i></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

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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>		
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		
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.		
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.		
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.		
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>		<p>In a white and bright space, the double height of the lower gallery overpowers the scale but not the intimate intent of the works. The gallery and exhibition at Talbot Rice is the subject of a new painting and <i>immerses the spectator into an installation that encompasses the entire gallery space.</i></p> <p>The miniature intensity of this work represents the artist's principle intentions – issues of scale and the relationship between artworks and the space in which a work is seen.</p> <p>It echoes also similar concerns between artworks, duration and exhibition location, as seen in the Hugh Lane Gallery series of paintings completed by the artist in 2006/7.</p> <p>Grassie also includes a 'demonstration painting' of how to mix egg tempera, playfully positioned at the upper far end of the exhibition – with a 'key facts' statement for visitors.</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'</p>		8763 visitors in total to the exhibition

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>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>		
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>		<p>An education and events programme included an artist’s talk on 2 August attended by 41 people.</p> <p>In the Frame – a tour for visually impaired visitors was held on 20 August attended by 11 people (maximum 12).</p> <p>A lunchtime talk by the Curator, Education & Development on 26 August attended by 24 people discussed the work of the artist in a walking tour of the exhibition.</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>		

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	Talbot Rice Gallery, as part of the University of Edinburgh was a very suitable venue for an academic, intellectually stimulating exhibition by Andrew Grassie.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Brief and to the point with concise, succinct wall based and information sheets, an excellent reading table with extensive articles about the artist; complemented by a press file and two books: Art and Photography by Phaidon and New Perspectives in Painting by Vitamin P.
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.	Dedicated leaflets and website allocated to outline and promote the exhibition and principle issues and concepts intrinsic to the work. Very focussed background(s) given to the works, a little 'dry' at times in style but which left the viewer a degree of independence to consider the works rather than over-explain.
Ease of booking and payment	
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Fairly central location just off South Bridge, on main bus routes and not too far a walk from Waverley Station. As the Gallery is on first and second floors of an original, dark stone university building, it may lack a certain welcoming visibility and passing audience unless they are prepared or physically able to cross a large open courtyard with gravel and changing levels.
External signage and signposting	Good signage and signposting from South Bridge and Chambers Street via West College Street.
Internal directional signage	OK
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	It might be pretty daunting for less able people to navigate to the gallery. There are lifts to the upper exhibition spaces but only on arrival and within the university building in an empty hallway.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Very good; helpful, communicative and visitor focussed when necessary or requested.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	SAC acknowledgement widely used and visible.

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.