



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: | Oliver Godow, Iain Kettles, Ellen Munro, Alec Finlay, Miranda Biennerhasset |
| Venue: | Talbot Rice Gallery/ Edinburgh University campus |
| Title of Event : | Desire Lines |
| Type of Event: | Exhibition |
| Date of Visit: | 20 April 2009 |
| Overall Rating: | Satisfactory |
| The format of "the trail" along an informal route to discover the work and the environment it explored was engaging. The title and supporting material was inviting and intriguing. The choice of artists was potentially promising. The work itself was not as substantially interesting or provocative as the expectation created by the publicity and interpretative material | |
| <i>(Please rate the event overall, taking into account your ratings for each section. Please state the key reasons for your overall ratings – ie 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: Jane Jeffrey | Date: 01 May 2009 |
| 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 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>Satisfactory</p> | <p>This is a group show of 5 artists who were invited to find their own place on the university campus. Oliver Godow's photographs in the Information Hub are evocative records of the university spaces (empty of people) that carry the visual traces of occupancy and daily life. The photographs invite us to reflect upon our intellectual intuition of those organising schemes and patterns that seem to lie 'behind' and to underpin this reality, the invisible realm of abstract ideas, concepts, and beliefs as well as working in purely visual abstract terms. They create a promising start to the exhibition 'trail' across the campus.</p> <p>In Potterow Student Centre the artworks by Iain Kettles and Ellen Munro were initially quite hard to spot in the busy cluttered environment of the canteen. There appeared to be two inflatable pieces by Iain at ceiling level and the installation by Ellen bore a notice asking for information about the removal of one of the components. This was disappointing as both artists have produced some notable work previously and this circumstance didn't really give the work a chance to make any impact on the cheerful informality of the social space. In George Square Gardens Alec Finlay has installed 6 simple green painted bird boxes bearing text which engages by employing word-play on the names of the trees they are attached to. In the George Square Lecture Theatre Miranda Blennerhassett has installed paintings on the walls that generate a consideration of the 'brutalist' architecture.</p> <p>The works shown each have individual charm and some succeed well enough in drawing attention to the nature of their surroundings but overall the exhibition did seem a little 'thin' on content. An important component of the experience is walking the spaces between the sites to find the works and the feeling that the actual content when found doesn't quite hang together enough in terms of artistic significance to be more than pleasantly diverting .</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. | <p>Satisfactory</p> | <p>The outlying nature of the exhibition was prompted by the need to vacate the gallery space for renovations so is not solely spawned by the curatorial vision of Talbot Rice Gallery, and is a departure from their usual practice. However the use of the whole campus is perfectly compatible with the commitment to present "the work of contemporary Scottish and International artists through solo, retrospective, and thematic exhibitions" and linked experimental projects. With rigorous curatorial purpose the opportunity it presents to artists could, if pursued again, be very rewarding for visitors to the Talbot Rice future programme.</p> |

| Criteria | Rating | Comments and key reasons for rating |
|--|--------------|--|
| <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> | Satisfactory | <p>In many ways the “Desire Lines” project as described in the programme and booklet is bigger and more exciting and intriguing than the actual experience of the exhibition itself. However the work did partially fulfil “a wish to make us stop and question; both our surroundings and the reason for their existence.” As stated the nature of the project was shaped by an organisational need to vacate the gallery space. Each artist found their own space on the campus to work with.</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 comments like overall? • What activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist’s talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info? | Good | <p>With some reservations about the way the Student Centre space was utilised, the overall placing of sites and the walking distances between them was good for the viewer. Materials available in the Information Hub were excellent and informative, though the maps which form the design for the booklet and signage are a little too stylised and ambiguous to be useful. There were some visitor postings from people who had completed the walk on a board in the Information Hub (which is the starting point of the route). They were positive about the concept and the experience of walking round the campus to find the work were entertained by the work; some commented that there was not enough work in the exhibition.</p> <p>There is an events programme for visitors built around the exhibition which takes the form of a once weekly guided tour of 45 mins that is open to everyone and tailor made tours for groups. Artist’s workshops with a local nursery and artist led events are also indicated on the website but with no details or dates available at that time.</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.

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>The starting point of the route is at the Information Hub next to the Talbot Rice Gallery and is easy to find. The route is suitable for the work being shown.</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>There is an excellent booklet to pick up at the start point which echoes the information on the website. There is further information about the artists at the start point.</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 is thorough and widespread– website, listings, magazines, press, other venues Language used is straightforward and engaging for a wide audience. Scottish Arts Council funding is acknowledged throughout.</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>Easy to find start of route but maps not very clear for following the route. I didn't see Braille signage or signage for audio loops.</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>No</td> <td>Audio description</td> <td>No</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td>No</td> <td>Lift/ramp</td> <td>N/a</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accessible toilets</td> <td>Yes in student centre</td> <td>Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English</td> <td>No</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> | | Yes/No | | Yes/No | BSL interpretation | No | Audio description | No | Captioning | No | Lift/ramp | N/a | Accessible toilets | Yes in student centre | Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English | No |
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| Captioning | No | Lift/ramp | N/a | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Accessible toilets | Yes in student centre | Accessible marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English | No | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| <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>There was no staff presence.</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.