



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:	Ian Smith and Mischief La Bas in partnership with NTS and Tramway		
Venue:	Tramway		
Title of Event:	<i>Peeping at Bosch</i>		
Type of Event:	Performance installation		
Date of Visit:	11 Jul 08		
Overall Rating:	Poor		
<p>The company plans in the long term to create a large-scale outdoor piece based on Bosch's painting. In this version they experimented with creating an 'intimate' version in a live art/theatrical installation format. Unfortunately, I feel that the experiment failed. Too often the interpretation of the painting was literal and banal and the execution lacked artistic flair. I found the design (central to the success of this piece) to be of poor quality in both conception and execution. Ultimately, the piece lacked visual flair, emotional impact, intellectual depth or social comment.</p>			
Name: David Leddy		Date: 11 Aug 08	
Specialist Advisor	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Scottish Arts Council Officer	<i>Please circle the relevant title</i>

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 - Quality of ideas, skills in execution; if you've seen the work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on the comparison.	Poor.	Too often the interpretation of the painting was literal and banal, lacking artistic flair (Eden, for example, was accompanied by a poorly performed reading of the book of Genesis). The piece completely shied away from any sort of analysis and/or contemplation of religion which seemed inadequate when reinterpreting a religious work of art for contemporary audiences.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.	Competent	An artist-led piece of work from Ian Smith and Mischief La Bas, who worked with a large group of collaborators on the piece.
All	Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes. Education events – see ¹ below for guidance	Poor	The aim was to 'reclaim, transform and interact with the painting' and to create an 'intimate' piece of work based on Bosch's painting. Whilst the piece successfully used Bosch's work as the basis for an interactive installation, I was left wondering why it had been made at all. The piece lacked visual flair, emotional impact, intellectual depth or social comment.
All	Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.	Competent	The performers carried out their work proficiently.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc	Poor	This was mainly confined to Adam and Eve in Eden. The quality of choreography (taking heavy influence from Japanese Butoh) was generally inadequate. At the same time, the delicate, minimal quality of the work was completely destroyed by loud noise coming from other rooms.
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.	n/a	Even though text was not the main focus of this piece, the recorded texts were particularly unsuccessful due to a very poor performance and poor quality sound equipment which combined to make the text almost incomprehensible.
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.	Poor	Direction of the piece lacked vision and originality.

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
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/ recorded) to the production.		Even making notes the day after seeing the piece I found it impossible to recall the use of music at all.
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.	Poor	Whilst I felt that Ian Kettles’ ‘bubbles’ worked very well, I generally found the rest of the design to be of poor quality in conception and execution. Despite having obviously had a sizeable budget, I found that the design too often lacked creative finesse. The repeated use of cheap, everyday materials (e.g. painted wooden flats, woodchips) gave a somewhat pantomime effect to the design.
All	Quality of Presentation/Engagement Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).	Poor	As far as I could tell the piece ran smoothly. However, there were serious problems with sound bleeding through from one ‘realm’ into the others. Loud screaming and clattering from ‘hell’ completely destroyed what little atmosphere had been created in the other two realms. In the accompanying DVD catalogue/programme we are told that these problems were anticipated early on in the process but seem to have been simply shrugged off (“Hey-ho” says the director).
All	Audience Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/participants; estimate the size and reaction		Sold out audience. A lukewarm reaction from all of the people that I spoke to. The company used an innovative and witty method of collecting audience responses. This was slightly marred by the fact that I had to queue for nearly fifteen minutes in order to do it.
All	Additional Interpretative activity –		None that I was made aware of.
All	Outcomes of education activity –		N/a

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	Suitable overall, but sound issues should have been addressed.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	DVD catalogue / programme contained a large amount (nearly an hour) of information which was mostly trivial and lacked any kind of insight into the painting itself or into the process of making the show. Very disappointing and a wasted opportunity.
Publicity/ pre-publicity –.	The marketing for the piece was good, with a high quality folding flyer. The marketing copy was well-written and accessible, making the piece more user-friendly to audiences who wouldn't normally come to experimental or unusual work.
Ease of booking and payment	Easy.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Adequate.
External signage and signposting	Better external signage needed at Tramway.
Internal directional signage	Much improved internal signage in Tramway.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	This piece would be very difficult for people with mobility problems to access.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	I felt that the timing of the piece needed more attention. We waited for quite a while before being led into the installations. Once I was finished, I had to wait again in a queue in order to give my feedback. There was a paucity of material in the three rooms themselves. In the installations themselves I had looked in detail, lingered in all three rooms and returned to each one three times. Even so, I was unable to fill more than 25 minutes of time. Thus, I spent almost half of my time waiting to go in or waiting to leave.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	I was treated very rudely by a member of the Bosch team who aggressively berated me for walking in the 'wrong' direction from room to room. I pointed out that our tickets told us we should 'visit and re-visit realms in any order' and he scolded me again as if I was a naughty child. Very poor. Tramway staff were efficient and helpful.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding	SAC credited on all material as far as I was aware.

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.

Mischief La-Bas feel that this appraisal is so unremittingly negative that it sits almost completely at odds with the other feedback we have received about the presentation. Particularly, two four-star reviews, outstandingly positive audience reaction (as collated and available in our forthcoming report) and a wealth of positive feedback from partners, collaborators and peers. We would be happy to furnish a wide ranging list of senior professionals (from international producers to Arts Council representatives) who attended the show and reacted very differently to Mr. Leddy.

Notes: The production actually had a relatively small production budget for the scale of ambition, great care was taken to design the piece (and particularly the carousel device) for disabled access, and music was composed for the animation soundtrack in addition to the various soundscapes delivered in the show.

The level of intellectual engagement was deemed appropriate for a piece aiming to introduce audiences to the world of Bosch. This level of accessibility was vindicated by the fact that the presentation achieved capacity audiences who (through the evaluation process) expressed great enthusiasm for the potential expansion of this themed project.

Ian Smith undertook additional educational activity in the form of two lectures (one to public and producers, one to art students)