



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: Aileen Campbell

Venue: Transmission

Title of Event: STARFORM

Type of Event: (e.g. performance, exhibition, informal showing, work-in-progress, workshop, screening, lecture etc)

Exhibition of two video works and photographs by Aileen Campbell.

Date of Visit: 17 October 2007

Overall Rating: 4

(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.)

This was an exhibition of interesting work, well presented, with the potential to connect with a broad range of people. There were only limited and somewhat academic contextual materials, and a seeming reluctance of the venue, with its window grills, to entice anyone in.

Name: Gary Thomas Date: 5 / 11 / 2007

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>	4	<p>The exhibition comprises two short films (5 and 7 minutes), and 12 photographs. The subjects/performers appear to be amateur singers – the works are titled <i>STARFORM Alex</i> and <i>STARFORM Thomas</i> – ‘documented’ at home, and at a swimming pool. The camera picks out detail, and they start to sing, to the accompaniment of musicians who are, incongruously, present in the space. The films are engaging portraits, with an unexpected strangeness, that elicit, as the exhibition notes say, “feelings of empathy.. nostalgia.” The use of “structures of music-making” may not be readily apparent in the works themselves, but they do convey a sense of the power of music, and the voice in particular. The work is well shot and edited, with an eye for detail; they are delicate and sensitively drawn portraits, underscored by a slightly unsettling poignancy.</p> <p>I’d encourage the artist to maybe spend more time thinking about composition (film, not music), and more time editing, or to work with an editor, but these are nevertheless ambitious and focused works, and successfully realised. I would have liked to see a third work.</p> <p>The accompanying b&w photographs are a series of ‘production stills’. I don’t think they add much to the video, and the explanation in the exhibition notes was beyond me: “stills which show the photograph as the object itself...These stills are the performed event; are documents to extend the state of the event”.</p> <p>I felt the colour stills from the films themselves, included in the accompanying publication were much stronger than the exhibited production stills.</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>Transmission is an artist led space, curated and managed by a voluntary committee. What seems to be missing is a curatorially-inflected dialogue with the artist; ie a more independent, objective, interpretive, and rigorous approach than might come from fellow artists. The exhibition notes – just three paragraphs – are quite impenetrable, and focus on theoretical intentionality that isn’t readily apparent in the works themselves. It’s not that this isn’t of value, but it is disappointing, because I think there is much more in these works that a non-specialist audience could connect with. The booklet, for example, has a ‘conversation’ between four musician-academics, who discuss ‘sound-making’, but don’t address the work directly at all. Whereas what I’m more interested in is what the artist herself might have to say, and what the</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			subjects of STARFORM – Alex and Thomas – might have to say themselves about their experience and the importance of their own ‘sound-making’.
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>	3	It’s a successful, albeit modest, solo show. The work communicates strongly, but I would have welcomed more information.
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</p>	4	Transmission is evidently operating under financial constraints, but it’s a reasonable space, and the show was neatly installed and working. The videos run for 12 minutes, and I’m sure people would view them more than once, and I think some seating would encourage that.

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>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>		
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>There was no comments book.</p> <p>There were no other visitors when I was there (a Wednesday afternoon).</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>	3	<p>A publication launch and performance on 13 October is noted on the exhibition poster and notes, but there was no other information.</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	Transmission is clearly not awash with money, but it is a comfortable and reasonably maintained space.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	<p>There was an A3 poster in the window, and brief (one side A4) exhibition notes.</p> <p>A 16 page booklet accompanying the exhibition was on sale for £5 – the 'publication launch' was mentioned on the exhibition notes sheet, but it wasn't on display on the gallery bookshelves.</p> <p>I think the work has very strong potential to connect with a general audience, and this is undermined by an exclusively theoretical approach in the contextual materials. Having read the exhibition notes and the booklet 'conversation', I still don't quite understand what the exhibition's subtitle – "sounding as a local structure" – means. But I did get a sense that music was important to the artist, and to her subjects, and I'd have liked to know more about that.</p> <p>The publication wasn't on display on the book/magazine shelves; there were shrink-wrapped copies of the Transmission book, but no price indicated, and no display copy.</p> <p>The website doesn't have an archive of previous exhibitions.</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.	The website had clear information about the exhibition.
Ease of booking and payment	n/a
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	If you know the street, it's easy to find. It's a five minute walk from Glasgow Central Station.
External signage and signposting	It's a shopfront space, and has a large sign. There are large windows, with window grills that mean it's not immediately apparent that the gallery is open, or that there's an exhibition on – exhibition posters are in the window, but they're behind the grills. So – it's all a bit unwelcoming.
Internal directional signage	Open the door and you're in. However, the gallery office is at the back, not visible from the door, and I think that it could be off putting to enter the gallery and not be immediately aware that anyone was

Criteria	Comment
	there.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	Access is level, though it's not immediately apparent that the gallery is actually open.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Gallery hours are 11 – 5, Tuesday to Saturday. It might be an idea to see whether opening from, say, 2 – 7 on a Thursday, draws more/different people.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	The invigilator was working in the office, at the back of the gallery. She was very friendly when I asked whether the publication was available to buy.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	The exhibition and membership sheets prominently acknowledge SAC support, but don't carry the logo. The logo is on the website.

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.