



Scottish Arts Council

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: Skylar Haskard

Venue: Transmission Gallery

Title of Event: Skylar Haskard

Type of Event: Exhibition

Date of Visit: 21 June 2007

Overall Rating: Competent

Transmission fulfils an important 'research and development' and training function within the Scottish Arts Council's portfolio of visual arts organisations. As such it should be allowed to take risks and it should be expected, occasionally, to fail. However, I felt that further attention could be paid to the needs of audiences in terms of making information available generally. I did not find the exhibition engaging. That in itself is fine, however, I felt that there could have been more additional information to assist or encourage my engagement with the work. (The single piece of interpretation material that was available seemed to have been written prior to the site-specific work being made). There were issues too about the fact that the gallery looked closed and did not advertise either the fact that it was open or the opening hours. I am aware that the venue is a temporary one, and that this exhibition obscured the view into the gallery from the outside, however I felt the organisation could do more to encourage visitors less familiar with the organisation to cross the threshold.

Name: _____ Kate Tregaskis _____ Date: 05/07/07 _____

Specialist Advisor Scottish Arts Council Officer *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	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.	3	<p>The exhibition consisted of a new site specific piece made for the gallery by Skylar Haskard. Haskard is a Los Angeles based artist who completed a BA at Glasgow School of Art and an MFA from UCLA and has subsequently shown work in established venues in the States and in Europe. The installation consisted of a room/den constructed within the exhibition space insulated with tin foil containing various objects including chairs, a fridge, 2 tomato plants, a TV monitor and a photocopier. Outside the room was a motorised pedal bike.</p> <p>I was not familiar with the artist's work and found it difficult to engage with.</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 run by a voluntary committee which changes every two years. The committee are responsible for the exhibitions. The gallery is an artist-run organisation at the centre of the visual arts community in Scotland. Since it was established in 1983, it has played a pivotal role in the nurturing, presentation and promotion of visual artists in Scotland, helping to propel them onto an international stage. Transmission provides its members, and more particularly its committee, with valuable experiences and opportunities. The organisation serves an important 'research and development' function both in the presentation of the artists work and in the experiences gained by its committee members.</p> <p>A newly commissioned/site specific work is always a risk because the commissioning organisation does not know what the final work will be like. It is appropriate - indeed it is part of the organisations function and it's raison d'etre - that the organisation should take risks. Some of those risks will fail and the organisation needs to be allowed to fail.</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 ¹ below for guidance</p>		<p>The interpretation material was an A4 handout which talked generally about Haskard's concerns. It seemed to have been written before the work was installed and so did not deal directly with the work on show.</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
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>		I found it difficult to engage with the work, I was unclear about what the artist was trying to do.
Dance, Theatre	Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc		N/A
Theatre	Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.		N/A
Theatre, Dance	Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.		N/A
Dance, Theatre	Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.		N/A
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.		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>	3	The exhibition was site –specific and so had been designed by the artist for the space.
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	There were no other visitors at the time of my visit (a wet Thursday morning shortly after the gallery had opened...). I wasn't aware of a comments book. I didn't spend more than twenty minutes in the exhibition as I didn't find it engaging and there was no additional material to assist me in 'finding a way in'.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	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.		I wasn't aware of any talks or other interpretative events programmed to support the exhibition.
All	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)?		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	The venue was appropriate for the exhibition in that the installation was site-specific and therefore had been created for the venue.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	<p>There was an A4 photocopied handout which made general statements about the artists work and informed the viewer that this particular presentation had been produced in situ in response to the space and the gallery site. It included brief biographical information about the artist.</p> <p>There was no additional information about the artist's work - such as previous catalogues, press releases, images.</p> <p>The language used in the handout was not as clear or useful as it perhaps could have been - obscuring any sense of what the work might be about under the weight of the claims made for it: '...Here, in a tacit invitation for interactivity, there is the sense of an ineffable quest for alternative methods to approach the day to day via reappropriations of theory, emblems and logotypes.'</p> <p>The day and time I went in the bike was being re-charged. Asked invigilator about it (as it wasn't clear whether the fact the bike being recharged was part of the work !) and was told about the role that the bike was going to have, but which then hadn't come off. I was told that the public were allowed to ride the bike round the gallery but there was no notice to this effect</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 carries the same information as the handout.
Ease of booking and payment	N/A
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Transmission is based in Glasgow, currently occupying temporary premises down the street from it's previous location. It is part of an important cluster of cultural organisations in the Trongate area.
External signage and signposting	<p>This exhibition involved temporary walls being constructed within the 'shop front' exhibition space, this coupled with the security mesh over the windows made the space look closed and 'boarded up'.</p> <p>More people might be encouraged to cross the threshold if there was a sign on the door that indicated that the space was open or if opening hours were visible from the street.</p>
Internal directional signage	Not necessary

Criteria	Comment
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	The gallery space is on the ground floor and entered from the main door.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	N/A
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	The member of staff working in the office was friendly but only informative in a kind of deflective way. He suggested I contact the artist's Los Angeles Gallery if I wanted to know more about the artist's previous work and he talked to me briefly about what the artist had originally intended, rather than being forthcoming about what the artist had actually done.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	The Scottish Arts Council is credited on the handout.

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.

Skylar Haskard's practice came to our attention for what we felt was a continued and engaged focus on experimental installation informed directly by its broader social and topographic context. As an artist at a relatively early stage in his career we hoped to provide a context where he could develop a substantial new project in situ supported by the gallery and committee.

In response to the report's comments on information/ interpretive material at venue it is perhaps important to acknowledge that we work closely with each artist to ensure that they are happy with any material provided in addition to their work. We were in agreement with Skylar that any explicit wall mounted information might compromise his intention to produce work where the interpretive process should be experiential and informed by his careful installation in the whole gallery space.

The intention of this particular exhibition was to provide an artist with the time and space to create a new piece of work in reaction to the gallery space. In this respect the exhibition was the product of a period of experimentation and not necessarily a complete body of work intended specifically for show.

It was also difficult to provide accompanying information that specifically commented on the site-specific installation as this was being constructed and experimented with up until the day of the exhibition opening. In future we will put a conscientious focus on providing comprehensive information and clear signage.

There are unfortunately unavoidable security issues meaning that it was necessary to install grates on all of the windows that face onto King Street and the door of the gallery. We realise that this can lead to confusion as to whether the gallery is open or not. The committee will address and resolve this issue in time for the forthcoming exhibition in September.

The committee is grateful for all feedback and views it as crucial in the organisation's development.