



**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.**

<b>Artist:</b>	<b>Alex Cross</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Transmission Gallery and parkland opposite 151 Brassey Street, Ruchill, Glasgow</b>
<b>Title of Event:</b>	<b>“Swamp Thing”</b>
<b>Type of Event:</b>	<b>solo gallery and offsite exhibition</b>
<b>Date of Visit:</b>	<b>11 March 2009 (exhibition ran 14 February – 14 March)</b>
<b>Overall Rating:</b>	<b>Very good</b>

*(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.)*

This was a strong and enjoyable experience, and I was particularly impressed by the coherence/resonance across the gallery and offsite work. The work is intriguing and thought provoking. I think even a minimal amount of interpretive information – such as an artist’s statement, or extract from the forthcoming catalogue – would have been useful at both sites.

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Gary Thomas</b>	<b>Date:</b>	<b>30 April 2009</b>
<b>Scottish Arts Council Officer</b>		<b>Specialist Advisor</b>	

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"> <li>• Quality of ideas, execution of work and installation</li> <li>• if you have seen other work of this artist(s) before, please comment on any relevant comparisons</li> </ul>	<p>Very good</p>	<p>The exhibition was in two parts. An offsite work in parkland outside the city centre, beside a golf course, and overlooking a canal consisted of a raised platform, resting on steel girder pilotis, with green and red partial side panels.</p> <p>At the Transmission Gallery installation, a monitor showed video footage of a tomato festival in a small Spanish village, and a cone sculpture, about five feet high, and covered in mainly muddy-brown plasticine, stood in the centre of the gallery. Paper overshoe protectors – 9 pairs in a row – were available to allow spectators to ‘climb’ the cone.</p> <p>I found this an intriguing and rewarding exhibition of work. Having seen the offset installation first, my initial sense that this might be challenging work for a casual viewer to engage with was quickly dispelled.</p> <p>The press release talks of “Gross challenges the position of the spectator”...the work “stressing of the relationship between object, site and spectator”, and a “disregard for the expectations and ordering of architectural and natural form..”</p> <p>These concerns are readily apparent. The Swamp Thing structure is mysterious and strange, seeming either unfinished or dilapidated, and only hinting at any function or purpose. It’s a stage, but without any means of getting onto it. Similarly, one is invited to climb onto the ‘muddy’ cone, but the sculpture’s height and gradient thwarts the possibility of doing so, at least for an average adult.</p> <p>The crowd at the tomato festival forces frenetic camera movement that thwarts the attempt to document the event, whilst simultaneously conveying its spirit all the more accurately.</p> <p>On encountering these three seemingly disparate elements, common ‘themes’ quickly emerge, and the exhibition insistently provokes the viewer to consider their physical self, and their relationship to/with the work. And it does this with a refreshing clarity and wit.</p>

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does it fit within the artistic vision of the organisation?</li> <li>• If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</li> </ul>	Very good	<p>Transmission is a small, volunteer managed organisation that seeks to “maintain a fluid and varied relationship with developing concerns in the world of the visual arts...committed to keeping its engagement challenging and current.” Swamp Thing delivers strongly against these aims, offering the opportunity for an emergent artist to realise an ambitious and thoughtful project.</p>
<p>Success of event against stated aims of exhibition</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How does it relate to information contained in the programme, the website or other printed material?</li> <li>• How well did it communicate the artistic themes?</li> <li>• How did the event originate eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, from the artist or from commission?</li> </ul> <p>Education events – see <sup>1</sup>below for definition</p>	Very good	<p>Transmission is an artist led organisation, set up as “a place where artists can meet, talk and exhibit along with local and international peers and influences”. The exhibition is a strong contribution to these ambitions: Alex Gross studied at Glasgow School of Art and the exhibition is the gallery’s ‘Scottish Solo Show 2009’. Transmission is a small organisation, and the managing committee selects the programme. This exhibition, and their ongoing programme, demonstrates strong curatorial skills and decision making, and the success of this ambitiously conceived and effectively realised project suggests that in delivery their support for and collaboration with artists is strong.</p> <p>As noted above, the exhibition very effectively communicated the artistic themes as briefly indicated in the press release. The contextual information available, however, was limited to the press release. This was succinctly helpful, but something more would have been welcome. A catalogue to ‘accompany’ the exhibition wasn’t yet published, but some writing – essay, artist’s statement and biography – should not be too difficult to provide during the exhibition itself.</p>
<p>Quality of Public Engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of space and overall layout/hang?</li> <li>• What interpretation or support materials were available?</li> <li>• Were labels/maps available and how appropriate were they?</li> <li>• Was a Visitor Book available or opportunities for audiences to comment/interact? What were the comments like overall?</li> <li>• What activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist’s talks, discussion groups programmes, on line info?</li> </ul>	Poor	<p>I was engaged and inspired. There weren’t any other spectators in the gallery when I visited, but there was evidence that there’d been attempts at scaling Kegel, the cone sculpture.</p> <p>There was no indication of any education or other events being staged in relation to the exhibition other than the opening. A catalogue to ‘accompany’ the exhibition wasn’t published during the exhibition, and is not yet announced as available on the gallery website. As noted above, I think some small steps could be taken to greatly enhance this side of things.</p> <p>The invigilator was friendly and readily engaged in conversation about the exhibition.</p>

<sup>1</sup> 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"> <li>Is it easy to find?</li> <li>Is it on a main transport route?</li> <li>Are the spaces clean?</li> <li>How suitable was it for the exhibition?</li> </ul>	<p>The gallery is in central Glasgow, a short walk from Glasgow Central rail station, and near several other galleries. It is a small but reasonably sized space, and the installation fitted it well – it felt considered and appropriate.</p> <p>The off-site was some way out of town – a 10' taxi ride – though the website usefully provided a map for a 'scenic walk' from a metro station, and bus information. To get to the work itself, it was necessary to cross a very muddy field, but there was a warning about this on the website, and mentioned in a reply to an email enquiry. Anyway, the work would, perhaps, more effectively work as a strange presence intruding in the parkscape, seen from the canal walk that its position overlooked.</p>																
<p>Information/ interpretive material at venue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Are there programmes, posters and displays about the event?</li> <li>Is there information on the venue's website?</li> </ul>	<p>There was an useful, brief but succinct, press release, at the gallery and on the website, and the invigilator readily engaged in discussion.</p>																
<p>Publicity/ pre-publicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>What leaflets, posters, websites, did you see the event listed in?</li> <li>What publicity materials are produced?</li> <li>Is it easy to understand/appropriate to the intended audience?</li> <li>Where can you get the information?</li> <li>Is there Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding<sup>2</sup>?</li> </ul> <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>The website provided information about timing, location, and the mud. Scottish Arts Council funding was acknowledged on the website and on the press release sheet.</p>																
<p>Signage and signposting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Is the entrance clearly marked?</li> <li>Is there clear internal directional signage?</li> <li>Is there Braille signage or signage for audio loops?</li> </ul>	<p>The gallery has clear shop front signage, and you enter the space immediately. The entrance to the field was clearly signed, and the work easily located.</p>																
<p>Access and provision for disabled people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Please insert yes/no in the boxes to reflect what you notice about the venue/event</li> </ul> <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>n/a</td> <td>Audio description</td> <td>Invigilat or present</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Captioning</td> <td>n/a</td> <td>Lift/ramp</td> <td>Flat access</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Accessible toilets</td> <td></td> <td>Accessible</td> <td>No</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Yes/No		Yes/No	BSL interpretation	n/a	Audio description	Invigilat or present	Captioning	n/a	Lift/ramp	Flat access	Accessible toilets		Accessible	No
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BSL interpretation	n/a	Audio description	Invigilat or present														
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<sup>2</sup> 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.

Criteria	Comment			
			marketing materials eg website or alternative formats eg large print, Plain English	
<b>Customer service</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How was the quality and efficiency of staff (invigilators etc)</li> <li>• If possible, comment on how responsive they were to the needs of disabled customers?</li> </ul>	The gallery has level entrance. The offsite work was located across a very muddy field, but could be encountered, meaningfully, from the distance of the canal walkway that it overlooked.  An email enquiry about directions got a quick and friendly response, with a warning about the mud. The invigilator was friendly and engaging.			

### 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.