



## 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:** Transmission Gallery

**Venue:** Transmission Gallery

**Title of Event:** Moot Points

**Type of Event:** Exhibition

**Date of Visit:** 15 November 2008

**Overall Rating:** 5 - Excellent

This evaluation was made after visiting the Moot Points (MP) exhibition at Transmission (TM), reading through the materials gathered at the gallery, visiting the gallery website and downloading the online catalogue, and speaking with a TM board member. This was my first visit to TM in the last year, though I'm quite familiar with their programme through their press profile, and have visited the gallery many times in the past. As I am based in London, I was not able to observe the temporal events.

Moot Points is a very unorthodox exhibition as it is conceived as an interactive curatorial research project and not a 'proper' show. However, it was one of the most invaluable and exciting projects I've come across in Scotland and is exemplary of an extremely ambitious, forward thinking, and responsible artist-run-programme. The evaluation is made on the understanding of MP as a discursive, challenging, and cutting edge event – rather than a traditional exhibition – that in many ways offers more to the local communities than a normal exhibition could. MP offers a truly refreshing and exciting conception of the role of an artist-run-gallery – as educational forum, instigator of dialogue, and facilitator of innovative/experimental practices -- and this is the most outstanding of MP's many strengths. TM's interest in promoting and facilitating a more committed local engagement with curating practice is truly outstanding and should be applauded and further encouraged.

MP's format is more of a curatorial studio rather than a gallery and the space was used very effectively as a 'community research centre' or 'hub of exchange' with different events happening daily – from film screenings to workshops and talks -- and a plethora of engaging information materials on permanent display. Though somewhat visually problematic in between events, MP offered an enormous and incredibly provocative scope of research that appeals to a wide variety of audiences and instigates cross-cultural dialogue. This visual engagement concern is a very minor one in consideration of the overall excellence and strategic thinking behind the project. The materials that were selected for the project were of exceptionally high standard and evidence an outstanding curatorial approach to research. Many were rare publications and films from both major artists and more obscure and tremendously interesting practitioners – in short the project was a treasure trove of discovery for even the most seasoned of arts professionals and an excellent presentation of diverse materials for general interest audiences.

MP was exceptional in its conception and its execution was extremely well-thought through with exhibition strategies that mirrored, exposed, and critiqued curatorial processes and arts information networks. The emphasis on dialogue, interaction, and connectivity was omni-present throughout every aspect of the project – from development processes, to gallery resolution, programming of widely diverse events, and printed/online publication – resulting in an extremely clever and exceptionally well-thought through programme.

Name: Patricia Ellis Date:30/12/08

**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.	5	Moot Points (MP) operated more as a curator's studio than a show, which makes it quite unorthodox to evaluate as an 'exhibition' as many artists' works, such as films and videos were scheduled at different times (unable to view), and many artists were represented by very interesting published materials which were impossible to read in full during the length of a normal gallery visit. The participants were very considerably selected and evidenced an extremely high level of curatorial investigation. This section might be best considered as an evaluation of <i>curatorial practice as art practice</i> – and it is outstanding. Key participants were Olivia Plender, Dexter Sinister, The Faculty of Invisibility, Emma Hedditch, Katja Dalburg, Islington Mill Art Academy, Resonance FM, and Variant; because of the collaborative nature of the project there were many other artists represented as well through associative programming (ie various film screening programmes). I was familiar with only a few of the participants – OP, Resonance FM, Variant and the work on show was similar, though scaled down, to their usual presentations. The 'scaling down' is in line with the curatorial concept, presenting art practice as a form of extended and process-based networking/research. Overall extremely though provoking and refreshing, a real 'curios' of discovery and a scrupulous investigation of alternative practices.
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection</p> <p>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>	5	<p>The curatorial vision for MP was extremely innovative for Glasgow, and this show was well timed in relation to similar larger events ie. GSK at the RA, and it was also comparable/ congruous to the Unreliable Witness project on at the same time at Tramway. This type of exhibition has a long precedent internationally, and MP's approach is – with obvious scale restrictions -- comparable both in vision and execution to very ambitious projects ie Utopia Station, Documenta, and Century City. The show was developed through a very unusual process, originating from one curator's research which was abandoned, and continued, developed, expanded, and reworked by another, and this was very cleverly mirrored through the installation of the project as a kind of community hub – a centre of learning, immersion, and exchange. One of the problems with this type of 'show' is that though there is an overwhelming amount of information to engage with there's not much to 'see'. However, it provides an extremely provocative and exciting insight into curatorial practice and in relation to Transmission's key audience (practitioners/members) and it was an invaluable event that was very ambitious in bringing forth discussion, demystification, and engagement with curating practice. In consideration of Glasgow's audience, the show's 'hub' approach was very well considered, as viewers could return many times throughout the shows duration and constantly experience new things and enter dialogue with other visitors. The show was truly groundbreaking and I feel a pivotal event in Glasgow's art context and was exemplary of TM's function as artist-run-centre – this type of cutting-edge work is exactly what an ARC should be doing. Curating in Scotland is a very under-considered practice and this show was extremely strategic and proactive in identifying and addressing this as an area of concern and development. The only criticism is a very hesitant one in the scope of what this project accomplished: I'm not sure how 'useful' archive shows are in general – and that the ideas presented in this type of exhibition might better be approached through a more visual presentation that provides a tandem platform for curatorial and artistic talent. However MP's extreme function goes a long way towards laying ground-work for more fluent activities. In speaking with TM the interest and commitment to facilitating curatorial practice appears very strong and this is something that the SAC might be able to assist with/encourage.</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
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 <sup>1</sup>below for guidance</p>	5	<p>MP's by-line is "exercises in self-organisation, discourse, and collaboration", and the concepts of the project – networking, relationship building, grass-roots politics, alternative structures, extended practice etc. – are extremely well presented in both the materials in the gallery itself (and exhibition structure) and the accompanying informational materials ie. The online resources and comprehensive printed and online catalogue. The concept and scope of MP is extremely ambitious and highly responsible to the community and is exemplary in providing a critical investigation of both exhibition development and ARC infrastructures. One of my immediate thoughts in visiting the show was "wow, there's no curatorial education programme in Glasgow – here's an ARC fulfilling this role and providing a very real and much needed service". Can't stress enough how important this is – and the scope of possibility for this type of continued activity is enormous. Apologies if this is out of place in an Artistic Evaluation but feel it's an important consideration: Transmission would be very strategically placed for the implementation of an international curatorial residency programme. It would be a real shame if the commitment and level of professionalism exemplified in MP was only a one-off event. Is one of the most ambitious, well-thought through, strategic, and cleverly implemented projects I've seen in Scotland – beyond successful, it offers a real practical and visionary platform which hopefully will evidence long-lasting repercussions. Further projects of this kind would be incredibly valuable.</p>
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>	N/A	
Dance, Theatre	<p>Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc</p>	N/A	
Theatre	<p>Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.</p>	N/A	
Theatre, Dance	<p>Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.</p>	N/A	
Dance, Theatre	<p>Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production</p>	N/A	
Dance, Theatre	<p>Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.</p>	N/A	
All	<p>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</p>	4 Good	<p>MP's 'hang' was conceived more as a community centre than a traditional exhibition and the experience was more like visiting an active studio where research was readily accessible – not so much on display, but placed about the room for casual engagement/discovery. The atmosphere was inviting and inclusive and viewers felt encouraged to spend time pursuing materials at leisure or just having a tea and a chat. This is a very challenging mode of presentation which though very</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.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
	<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>		<p>successful in many ways is somewhat problematic for the viewer:  The installation of exhibition gives the veneer of 'anti-exhibition' – but is in fact extremely difficult to execute so that it doesn't feel contrived or alienating. Extremely well done and exemplary of performative curating. In communicating ideas and engaging, MP was multi-platformed, inviting multiple approaches to the material on show: investigation into a wide variety of arts practices, and curatorial practice from individual, discursive, and remote positions (one of the kudos of this show was the printed and online publication which is exceptionally well conceived and extremely thought provoking and informative – even if someone hadn't viewed the show, it provides an invaluable 'stand alone' document which operates exceptionally well as an independent research tool.)  Where it's problematic is in the <i>actual</i> engagement of the viewer – and this is often inherent in research based practice. Because there's not much to 'look at' it assumes that the audience has the initiative/interest to investigate further – is quite demanding. To be honest, I spent time with every piece in the room because I had to for this report – but ordinarily I would have felt put upon to be expected to do so much 'work' and probably would spend only a few minutes clocking what's available and return only for the scheduled events. Is an inherent part of the exhibition concept – is an exciting consideration of a gallery as a 'library' but was left wishing there was more visual engagement to snag/hold my attention and lead me to take more interest in the printed materials – a few visually orientated pieces would offer some more direct rewards and provide more immediate conversation points for the discursive ambitions of the show.</p>
All	<p><b>Audience</b></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>		<p>The audience for this event is quite exciting as it bridges visual art, media, music, and publishing and attracts audiences from a diversity of interests. This 'networking' of practices is inherent in the exhibition concept and processes and exemplifies the power of autonomous research/strategies of engagement. For an immediate art audience this show is outstandingly cutting-edge and provocative and provides a direct and much in demand service and an innovative platform for dialogue and continued research. Because of the wide variety of activities held during the project, attendance was very high and brought in audiences from different backgrounds. During my visit, the gallery was busy and people seemed to be engaging well with the show.</p>
All	<p><b>Additional Interpretative activity</b> – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.</p>	5 Excellent	<p>MP is an interpretive activity within itself and is extremely well presented in the diversity of materials, media formats, and ideas on show. Because of the interactive execution of the project, it is very effectively conceived as one continuous, engaging, informative, and comprehensive workshop forum.</p>
All	<p><b>Outcomes of education activity</b> – 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>	5 Excellent	<p>The opportunity to view the curatorial process from an 'inside' perspective is tremendously interesting and educational and the project offers an incredibly well selected and diverse array of materials – especially quite rare and exciting publications and films – that are invaluable for a wide variety of arts practice-based research. One of the most interesting outcomes of the project was the public exhibition of TM's internal practices of developing art networks, discussions, and collaborations with institutions in other places. The project offered a fascinating and in-depth 'illustration' of the complexities of producing exhibitions and the active role of local practice in relation to and as an important part of wider national and international art networks.</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	This event was a very innovative and forward thinking project, and is exactly the kind of critical activity that Transmission should be facilitating. Extremely well conceived. Though there were some issues with the presentation, these are inherent with this type of activity, and these problems a key part a continuously developing dialogue within current curatorial practice.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	This event was very well facilitated through publications available onsite, and the gallery's website. Because of the installation of the event, the gallery itself was a very welcoming centre, encouraging open discussion and debate amongst gallery staff and visitors. There is also a comprehensive programme schedule available from the gallery and which can be downloaded, which in its content exceeds the usual interests and function of an exhibition catalogue.
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 gallery does a regular mail out to its members, as well as a press and listings mail out. TM has a very proactive press profile. They also have a very clear and user-friendly website.
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 located in the very centre of Glasgow, on main transportation routes, and walkable from most downtown locations. It is very easy to find.
External signage and signposting	Transmission occupied a large shop front on one of the main streets of the Saltmarket area, and has a huge sign on its exterior. Is impossible to miss it.
Internal directional signage	Is only one room, none are required.
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	It is ground floor level and wheelchair accessible, large print information materials are available on request.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	This event is one month long, with an event happening almost everyday. It is a very appropriate length, and the scope of activities are impressive.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	The staff were wonderful. Extremely helpful, friendly, professional.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	SAC logo appears on the website and all printed materials.

<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.

### 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.