



## 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:** TRAVELLING GALLERY

**Venue:** TRAVELLING GALLERY (outside City Art Centre)

**Title of Event:** RE/TRATO

**Type of Event:** EXHIBITION

**Date of Visit:** 29 February 2008

**Overall Rating:** 5. Excellent

*(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 evaluation has been made after visiting the Re/Trato show at Travelling Gallery in Edinburgh, visiting the gallery website, reading various gallery publications, and speaking with several members of gallery staff.

Founded in 1978, Travelling Gallery is a portable contemporary art gallery that travels about Scotland with intent of bringing art to culturally marginalised communities. Its dual focus is to create highly engaging exhibitions and to provide a unique platform for arts education. As both an exhibition and public service, Re/Trato was outstanding.

The selection of work was excellent, comprehensive, very well thought through, and superbly installed. The curating of the show was of the most exciting I've seen in Scotland – highly innovative, thoroughly researched, well balanced, easily accessible – without 'dumbing down', outward thinking (introducing new ideas, engaging with new networks), proactive in facilitating the careers of young artists through context and association with internationally established figures, and richly diverse – in content, media, and cultural orientation. The curatorial remit for this show was refreshing and inspirational.

Travelling Gallery is not unique in being a gallery/caravan, but their resolution to the project concept sets them apart from similar projects elsewhere. Extremely clever and absolutely delightful, this mini-museum is as good (if not better) than the real thing. The overall experience is of an acutely well conceived and executed conceptual project – knowing, critical, and very very funny.

Travelling Gallery's education programme is extremely intensive, visiting schools, community centres etc. throughout Scotland daily. Their approach to arts education is unique and enlightening – the gallery staff are well informed, extrovert and friendly, and inexhaustible. I wasn't able to observe a class in action, but I did get a guided tour. The speaker was highly knowledgeable, wonderfully motivating and good humoured, and had a very special ability to explain quite difficult works in an easy to understand and practical way. Most impressively, this discussion wasn't focussed on disseminating an 'agenda' or 'teaching', but a very healthy and interested exchange of ideas, inviting the viewers to engage with the art from a very meaningful and personally relevant perspective. This approach is interactive, positive and empowering, and invigorates a lasting confidence in transgressing perceived 'high art boundaries'. As a cutting edge and highly innovative approach to an arts education programme, Travelling Gallery is exemplary.

There are several other areas of comment which are outlined below. Overall, Travelling Gallery has been evaluated at 5. Excellent; the Re/Trato show was, in every aspect, an exceptional event and experience.

Name: PATRICIA ELLIS      Date: 18/03/08

**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. Excellent	A MoMA in miniature! was easily the best group show I've seen in Scotland for a <i>long</i> time. To describe Travelling Gallery as a venue is simply too limiting: it's a gallery, artwork, performance, education centre, and community hub, all rolled into one. The show was fab: international stars like Francis Upritchard, Kenny Hunter, Oscar Munoz, Ursula Sokolowska, (all with top drawer works – FU sculptures from series shown at Andrea Rosen NY, OM video hot off the Biennale circuit), very interesting up and comers ie. Shaun Gladwell, Greg Grant, and Nafeesa Umar – and Hideko Inoue's work was superb. Hung in proper museum fashion, replete with plinths and security rope, a compact education centre, off-line (pretending to be online) IT facilities, and portable office, Travelling Gallery does a better job at being a museum than most museums. Great to see such an exciting and diverse approach to curating, and art works presented in such a successful, sensitive, and engaging way. Have seen works by almost all of these artists previously – this show measured up to the best.
All (if relevant)	Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.  If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.	5. Excellent	The level of curatorial ambition presented quite frankly out does anything I've yet seen in Scotland – well considered, well researched, exceptionally well hung, diverse, outward thinking, situating young Scottish artists with international establishment, providing not only a really great show but a unique opportunity for both the gallery visitors and the participating artists. The show was extraordinarily well resolved, both visually and conceptually. Most impressive was the curatorial remit of creating new and perceptive critical relationships between very diverse arts practices.
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 <sup>1</sup> below for guidance	5. Excellent	Travelling Gallery's stated aims are found on their website, as well as in printed material available in the gallery. The gallery exceeds its intent to 'tour throughout Scotland to areas of poor provision of the contemporary visual arts'. Travelling Gallery's greatest strength is its commitment to servicing these communities with cultural excellence - this exhibition was of international quality and a very rare and invaluable experience for both its audience and participants. The tours are highly ambitious in outreach and geographical scope; this exhibition alone visited 15+ towns. Beyond simply facilitating arts education, Travelling Gallery was seen to operate as an active community interface: In my short visit Travelling Gallery weathered (and provided public shelter from) a storm, gave 2 gallery talks, offered directions to tourists, and posed for a photo shoot with a stuffed kangaroo! This isn't merely about showing culture in communities but celebrating the culture of communities. Travelling Gallery contextualises art as a vibrant and integral part of daily life.

<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
All	<p>Performers/<u>tutors</u> - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.</p> <p>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.</p>	5 Excellent	<p>Though Travelling Gallery doesn't consider itself as a 'performance' or it's education officers 'tutors', it addresses this category with great effect and sophistication, partly due to its carnival-esque nature. The man I met in the gallery was gregariously personable, knowledgeable, and extremely encouraging in opening dialogue about the work. He explained quite difficult pieces in a tremendously user-friendly and affable way, and was genuinely interested in the viewers' thoughts, reactions, and feedback. His enthusiasm was instantly contagious; this approach to engagement has the effect of making visitors feel like they are an integral part of the event and not just audience/observers.</p>
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>	5. Excellent	<p>Travelling Gallery has a set of unique spatial and technical challenges. In this exhibition, these were not only dealt with to showcase the art to best effect, but also with a very endearing self-effacing humour to highlight the gallery concept: the back wheel hubs had been converted to plinths supporting sculptures, videos were shown on flat screens to maximise space, the whole interior had been decked out in mock white cube plasterboard (replete with museum segmented wall effect), there was a corner mounted light box, and a photo that was deemed 'at risk' was cordoned off with a tiny security rope. The whole thing was a marvel of curating and ergonomics, with a strong consideration of health and safety: it is child proof, weather proof, and fully disabled accessible.</p> <p>Travelling Gallery's main activity is as an education centre: In the week I visited, Travelling Gallery had been to different schools everyday, giving talks, workshops, and tours to groups of children of all ages. The bus is fully decked out for all manner of inclusive learning, and events and 'pit-stops' can be booked by visiting their</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>website or phoning.</p> <p>Most commendably Travelling Gallery didn't attempt to 'dumb down' the art or the exhibition concept, but rather facilitated a confidence in their very broad audience to engage with these ideas with full artistic merit and integrity – explaining how things were made, the artists ideas and influences, and encouraging a relational and practical approach to interpretation. This is one of Travelling Gallery's greatest attributes.</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>Travelling Gallery's primary audience is the general public in its widest sense – school kids, community groups, random passersby, and the gallery is very well conceived and equipped to engage this audience.</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>		<p>An Educational pack is available for group visits and staff give talks on the exhibition to groups or individuals if required. An artist-led workshop programme is available for venues to book.</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>	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	Excellent – great selection of work in relation to the space – like a proper museum show, but <i>small</i> ... Its ability to travel throughout the country makes Travelling Gallery a dynamic and expedient venue.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	Travelling Gallery has very comprehensive interpretation materials – there were pamphlets, catalogues, press info, education info, and archive material on display in a wall mounted education centre and readily accessible from a compact library. There are also alternative access interpretation formats (outlined below).
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 Travelling Gallery website is easy to find on the web, and is well designed, informative, and user-friendly. Each exhibition is also accompanied by a publication which contains information about each artist in the show, and further information about the gallery and its education programme.
Ease of booking and payment	Booking is very easy, and details can be found online and in promotional material.
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	A full listing of planned stops can be found on their website and in TG publicity.
External signage and signposting	Can't miss it: it's a huge bus that says Travelling Gallery on the side in really big letters. And there is a sandwich board in prominent proximity to the gallery.
Internal directional signage	N/A
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	There is a ramp at the entrance for visitors using wheelchairs or pushchairs. There are no steps inside. A hearing loop facility is available plus large print and Braille versions of the exhibition booklet.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	Shows run for about 4 months, and travels consistently around the country. Tours seem a very appropriate length, and shows are designed for short visitation (small scale, full assistance).
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	Extremely friendly, helpful, very efficient, and very professional.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>2</sup>	Is prominent on website, all publications, and on the truck.

<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.

**We would like to thank Patricia Ellis for her generous and thorough review or Re/trato. The only comment we would like to make is regarding the accuracy of our geographical spread. The review mentions the TG visiting 15 towns with the Re/trato tour but this should be 15 local authority areas. Throughout the length of the tour we visited around 52 different towns and villages.**

**Many thanks**