



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – VISUAL ARTS

Organisation/Venue: Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop

Title of Event: New Members Exhibition featuring Anna Copland, Benjamin Fallon, Emma Herman-Smith, Malcolm Hosie, Scott Laverie, Stuart McCaffer, Colin Parker, Derek Sutherland, Christopher Walker and Val Young

Type of Event: group exhibition

Date of Visit: Saturday, 11 June 2005

Overall Rating (Please rate the production 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 resorting to the language of statistics the overall rating is very good. Out of 85 possible points, I have rated the group exhibition featuring emerging and established artists who have recently joined Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop (ESW) with 69 points. Positioned as part of Leith Festival it benefited from the exposure to more general audiences while 'migrating' the traditional annual event known as New Members Exhibition to a refreshingly new, non-gallery venue.

My constructive comments and recommendations are directed to the practice of acknowledging the curatorial vision and the Scottish Arts Council contribution, as well as utilising fully the advantage of exhibiting as part of a community focussed festival and the specific marketing and artistic opportunities arising from such a context.

Name: Iliyana Nedkova
Specialist Advisor

Date: 12/06/2005

This report has been commissioned by the Scottish Arts Council to evaluate the artistic quality of the production named below. 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 may be made available to Scottish Arts Council Officers, Council and Committee members, and specialist advisors as appropriate. It will 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 Council to report on the overall performance of its Core 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:

Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
Vision and imagination of artist's work ¹	4	<p>Brought together for the first time in this group exhibition the 10 new members of the ESW demonstrated a strong sense of both individual and collective integrity. Most of the artists preferred to exhibit new pieces which belonged to an ongoing, well-considered body of work, thus allowing for their strong artistic vision to transpire through a singled out object or an installation. An example of this approach is Anna Copland's Candy Stripes – a piece of paper packaging-cum-wallpaper-cum-origami; Malcolm Hosie's Chromo Thirteen object offering a light therapy of sorts or Scott Laverie's continuous engagement with the unsung heroes – the mechanics, engineers and fabricators of the modern world. There was also a trail of imaginative site-specific installations in response to the 'orphaned' venue within New Kirkgate shopping mall, the Leith Festival and perhaps to the National Bike Week.</p> <p>However, most of those subtle correspondences and characteristics were only discernable through a thorough inspection of the works and the photocopied guide/floor plan provided at the door. I wonder whether the vision and imagination of the artists would have been appreciated at a more brisk visit by non-gallery goers and festival attenders.</p>
Curatorial vision/ selection – also indicate if the event has originated from the exhibiting organisation, part of a festival, artist-led, or commissioned	4	<p>This group exhibition appeared to be well considered in its selection of a non-white cube space, the festival context, this particular group of artists, their individual works and the space layout.</p> <p>Unfortunately, there was no explicit reference to a curator/s and selector/s behind this major exhibition. There was also an understated acknowledgement on the ESW website only of the fact that this is an exhibition for just two days in an unusual environment and that it forms part of the Leith Festival. It was perhaps a missed curatorial opportunity to publicise this event within the annual festival which boasted 100 events, 50 venues within 1 mile radius. It was only on Leith Festival website where there was more of an introductory information about the range of ESW events but none during my visit to the exhibition on site.</p>
Events available/ groups targeted – workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups, pre-school/ primary/ secondary students, >18,>60 etc	4	<p>It was reassuring to find out that ESW held their traditional Open Day within the framework of the Leith Festival, i.e just the weekend prior to the reviewed show. It was referred to as 'always a very popular event' providing 'a chance for people to come and see what all the noise is about. As well as being able to meet artists in their studios and talk about their work, there will be a demonstration by artist Arran Ross of wood-carving, free workshops in puppetmaking, body-casting and mask-making for children from 3pm to 5pm and a barbeque from 4.00pm'. This well-packed Open Day sounded like a very good opportunity also to invite people to the exhibition the following weekend and I hope that has been the case.</p>

¹ Quality of ideas, skills in execution, if you've seen the work of this artist(s) before – particularly in relation to new work or second productions

		However, while visiting one was left with the impression that the exhibition is an isolated event with no further information ready at hand about ESW, its facilities and services for artists and anyone wanting to learn about and participate in arts activities.
Standard of Presentation – use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang	4	<p>The exhibition design was of high standards given that it was held at an alternative venue as two-day event only. The subtle sculptural presence of the works by Val Young, Colin Parker and Anna Copland was complimented by larger and more dominant works by Scott Laverie, Stuart McCaffer and Derek Sutherland. This contributed to the excellent layout.</p> <p>However, the only piece that needed a projection space, i.e Benjamin Fallon's The Exquisite Corpse (displaced) didn't benefit from the low quality/resolution of the projector which failed to achieve good daytime resolution of the image and the story was left untold. There was also no indication of how long the video art piece runs for and nowhere to sit down and engage with the narrative.</p>
Foot Traffic – number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit	4	It was on the Saturday, the last day of the show, that I visited. I was expecting far more visitors since it was lunchtime and the shopping centre was busy with families, festival goers and shoppers. To my surprise no one else visited during my half an hour or so stay. One can only speculate about the reasons people can cite for not attending contemporary visual arts events especially when there is so much on offer competing for their time and attention.
Audience Reaction – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors' books comments	4	It will be difficult to comment on any of the visitors' reaction at the time of my visit but judging from the guest book people who had visited before had left positive and enthusiastic comments.

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.

Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
Suitability of the venue for the event	4	The empty unit within the Kirkgate Shopping Centre proved to be a very good location for this exhibition. However, to my view ESW could have capitalised on the off-site location to generate new audiences. I would have welcomed an indication of the reason why such venue was selected. It is quite clear why EmergeD would exhibit and held events nextdoor as they are consistently

		pursuing to stage activities in such 'orphaned' sites.
Information/ interpretive material at venue ²	4	There was a very helpful and well-designed floor plan with brief interpretations of each work. This was provided as a basic photocopied handout upon entry. However, no further details, leaflets were provided about the ESW or Leith Festival. There was no access to press coverage about this or any related events.
Publicity/ pre- publicity ³	3	I have only been aware of the indirect pre-publicity campaign over the e-mail and Internet through EmergeD.
Ease of booking and payment	4	There was very useful information about the venue and the times provided on Leith Festival website as I haven't been able to find any other.
Location of venue	5	It was exciting to see that a venue at the heart of Leith has been used for showcasing the new talent at ESW while the Open Day was held on 'domestic' ground at the ESW premises.
External signage and signposting	4	The vinyl lettering reading New Members Exhibition on the venue's window facing the shopping arcade courtyard however fail to make a big impact within this very visual commercial environment competing for people's attention.
Internal directional signage	4	The floor plan provided a good navigational tool, albeit very basic and minimal.
Access and provision for disabled people	4	Since working off-site relies on the provision of the host, I would have welcomed more details about the accessibility on the pre-publicity information.
Opening times/ timing of the event	4	Time-wise all events appeared to have been considered according to the targeted groups. However, there was no reference to the curatorial choice of the short duration and opening times of the show.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. welcoming/ informed)	5	A very welcoming and informed staff, i.e. a couple of the exhibiting artists, were available to answer any queries. It makes all the difference to having volunteers at the reception with little to no involvement in the show.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ⁴	4	The only piece of publicity available at the time of my visit, i.e. the floor plan with the descriptive guide on each work carried the logo of the Scottish Arts Council. However, the ESW entry in the Leith Festival website carried no acknowledgement, unlike the ESW own website which had a credit line and the logo on the home page.

² These include wall panels, labels, catalogues, leaflets, artists CVs etc., assessing the range, quality and clarity

³ Publicity/pre-publicity (leaflets, posters, etc), including the range, content, and when and where available. Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event. Please also view and comment on the company's website where one is advertised. Comment on the ease of use, and quality of content and presentation, and currency of information

⁴ The following is an extract from the Scottish Arts Council's conditions of grant for funded organisations:

"The company should acknowledge Scottish Arts Council funding in press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, notices display, exhibition materials, websites and advertising). Acknowledgement of the Scottish Arts Council grant must also be made in any secondary or indirect products arising from the revenue funding such as recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, computer programmes etc."

Please comment on whether these conditions of grant were met, including use and prominence of the Scottish Arts Council logo on the company's website.