

Artistic Evaluation – Visual Arts

Organisation/Venue: New Media Scotland

Title of Event: DRIFT

Type of Event: A year-long, largely online initiative for new sound and radio art and experimental music

Date of Visit: Several visits from 22/10/2003 through 19/3/2004

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)*

DRIFT is a stimulating and entertaining project. Its keen sense of ambition accounts for most of its strengths and nearly all of its weaknesses. The audio pieces available to date through the agency of the internet portal are never less than competent, but I sense that the project suffers from an unnecessary degree of complexity in the make-up of its parts. Overall, and at this moment in time, I would rate DRIFT somewhere between 4 and 3.

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.

This form is available electronically. Please word process/type response.

Assessment will depend of nature of event/exhibition reviewed but we anticipate it should take between 30 - 45 minutes to fill this form in.

1. Artistic Assessment

Please evaluate the **artistic quality** of the exhibition/event and assess the strengths and weaknesses with specific reference to the following:

1.1 Vision and imagination

	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
<p>Artist's Work <i>(include quality of ideas, skills in execution, if you seen the work of this artist/ artists before - particularly in relation to new work, or second productions)</i></p>	4	<p>DRIFT is a project that encompasses new and specially commissioned sound art and experimental music by artists from Scotland and beyond. It is predicated on streaming media, and includes radio broadcasts, moving image, publications and live events.</p> <p>The current content of the DRIFT portal offers visitors a fairly narrow breadth of competent to good quality listening options. However, this situation may alter as the project develops and many more works are made available over the coming months.</p>
<p>Curatorial Vision/Selection</p>	3	<p>The DRIFT call for participation that went out in autumn 2003 featured details on radio art commissions, radio programme proposals, Resonant Cities (internet radio streaming that explores the sonic identity of cityscapes) and a touring video programme featuring moving image works inspired by sound art or experimental music. These commissions and other new works selected for inclusion in DRIFT are being webcast and radio broadcast. The whole project will be accompanied by the DRIFT journal, in both online and print versions, featuring commissioned new writings on sound art and experimental music, lost texts, schematics for making microphones, interviews with key people, audio diaries, resources and links to related sites. The DRIFT journal will also feature a specially curated companion audio CD.</p> <p>Having visited the portal on a number of occasions over many months, I am still unsure as to how the various commissions and other works were and are being chosen i.e. who has overall control of the curatorial vision. Certain elements of the project have named curators – Robert H King for at least a part of Resonant Cities, Iliyana Nedkova for the touring video programme and Chris Byrne and Colin Fallows for Sounds for Near and Far in the Artstream Archive – but the general visitor has no immediate idea of who these people are and what expertise they bring to the project. Greater selection transparency and biographies of the lead curators on the portal would improve the overall visitor experience.</p>
<p>Please indicate, as far as you are aware, if the event has been originated by the exhibiting organisation, hired, a collaboration, part of a festival, artist led</p>	N/A	<p>DRIFT has been initiated and developed by New Media Scotland and would seem to pick up from where the first DRIFT, which took place in 1999, left off.</p>

1.2 Clarity of communication

	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
Please indicate range, quantity, clarity, tone and level of Interpretative information/ material provided at the venue (<i>wall panels, labels, catalogue, leaflets, artists CVs</i>)	3	The interpretative information available on the portal is generally good, but I still found navigation problematic. The main reason for this is that DRIFT is a hugely ambitious and wide-ranging initiative, and its internal structure appears complex to the first-time and general visitor. Although New Media Scotland has taken pains to make things as clear as possible (through the use of emblems, menus, news items and the like), I was at a loss, at times, to know where I was on the portal and to what I was listening.
Please indicate events available and groups targeted (<i>workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups, primary, pre-school, secondary, students, over 18, over 60, other</i>)	4	<p>DRIFT will take place throughout 2004 and launched on 27-29 February with live streams from the Dialogues 2004 music festival in Edinburgh. To date, the site has featured webcasts of Streaming like it's 1999... (referring back to the first DRIFT festival), highlights from Dialogues 2004 and a new radio art commission called Hubbub by Mark Vernon. A new radio art commission called The Travels of Ljubljana Gusenbauer by Zoë Heller and a series of themed radio programmes, curated by Robert H King, for the Resonant Cities section of the project are also in production.</p> <p>All of this material is available via the internet portal and some of it is and will be available via radio broadcasts, journals, pdas, mobile phones and RSS feeds. Although I have no sense of who the project is targeted at, other than those that have a vested interest in sound art and experimental music, the range of access modes indicates a desire on the part of New Media Scotland to make the project widely available.</p>

1.3 Quality of production

Suitability of the venue for the exhibition/event	5	DRIFT has been developed largely with the internet and, to a lesser extent, radio in mind.
Standard of presentation (<i>include use of equipment, use of space and overall layout/hang</i>)	4	The graphical interface, designed by Andy McGregor, is attractive and efficient although it does take a while to come to terms with the meaning and use of the emblems.
Please indicate the number of visitors/participants at the time of your visit	N/A	The file reader counters indicate that a maximum of 434 visitors have been to the portal since its public launch around three weeks ago.
Please indicate the audience reaction (<i>please include time spent, interest, activity and visitors' book comments</i>)	N/A	It is not possible for me to assess audience reaction to the project, for obvious reasons, but I would assume that many of the 434 visitors noted above were repeat visitors like myself.

2. Management of Event

Please evaluate the way the event was presented/organised by the organisation and by the venue. Please answer, where relevant, with reference to the checklist below adding any other comments/observations you may have.

	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
Publicity/ pre-publicity ¹	4	The pre-publicity and publicity on the DRIFT project that I had forwarded to me was of a high quality, but I am unable to comment on how and whether the project has been profiled elsewhere online – through email listings, bulletin boards and so on – and in print.
Accessibility of venue	5	The supreme quality of the internet is its unsurpassed accessibility.
Ease of payment (if applicable)	N/A	
Location of venue	N/A	
External signposting and signage	N/A	
Internal directional signage	4	See earlier comments on the level of interpretative information and standard of presentation.
Access and provision for disabled people	4	The site is clean and legible, but the point size of the default font might cause some problems for visitors with certain kinds of visual impairment.
Opening times/ timing of the event	N/A	

¹ 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

Attractiveness for children/families	N/A	
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (eg welcoming/informed)	5	The DRIFT portal is very welcoming and endeavours to make the visitor experience as informative and as enjoyable as possible.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	N/A	All conditions of grant have been met vis-à-vis the acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding on the portal.

Name: Paul Bonaventura

Date: 19 March 2004

Advisor: X

² 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.