



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – CRAFTS

Organisation/Venue: North Lands Creative Glass

Title of Event: The Design Element

Type of Event: Conference

Date of Visit: 3-4 September 2005

Overall Rating: Good (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.)

This was a very good event – thoughtfully programmed, stimulating, well-managed and, I would judge from the level of engagement and comments heard, satisfying and relevant to the diverse range of professionals who participated. More attention is needed to a few technical aspects, notably a more positive approach to promoting access, otherwise the rating would have been Excellent.

Name: Helen Bennett Date: 05/09/05

Adviser: 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 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, taking account of the following:

Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
Vision and imagination	5	A well-conceived and wide-ranging consideration of the complex relationships between art, industry and design, developing some of the ideas examined at the 2004 Challenging Craft conference in Aberdeen on the impact of new technologies on crafts practice
Clarity of Communication	5	Description of event in programme and standard of communication by speakers very good.

2. Strengths and Weaknesses

Assess the strengths and weaknesses of the event, with reference to the following:

Criteria	Rating	Comment and key reasons for rating
Artists' Work – quality of ideas, skills in execution, use of materials	5	Speakers all notable in their respective field, with pleasing balance of Scottish-based, UK and international contributions. A few presentations could potentially have become unduly process-based but proved balanced overall.
Curatorial Vision/Selection – also indicate if the event has originated from the exhibiting organisation, artist-led, commissioned, part of a festival	5	Of the high calibre to be expected when developed by a well-qualified and internationally-informed Artistic Director supported by NLCG Advisory Panel and Board. Fully integrated with and supportive of the NLCG artistic programme
Standards of Presentation – use of equipment, space and overall arrangement	4	Intelligent use of visual material although presenters did not always appreciate that multiple images on one screen would be difficult to 'read' in a large hall. The unwillingness of a few speakers to use the PA system needs to be overcome (see below). Visual technology was well managed, with smooth transitions between slide and digital presentations.
Foot Traffic – number of visitors/ participants at time of visit	4	Although the 71 participants were less than attracted last year the mix was fruitful, reflecting NLCG's national /international role while not neglecting regional responsibility (50/50 Scotland-based/from outside Scotland; 20% participants from outside UK ; Scottish participants roughly 50/50 from Highland and from elsewhere)
Audience Reaction – time spent, feedback, interest and participation	5	A high level of engagement was maintained throughout with both attendance and discussion after each paper/section continued to the end

Events Available/ Groups Targeted ¹ – appropriateness of event for the audience	5	The NLCG conference attracts an unusually wide audience – including recent graduates, established practitioners, academics, writers, curators, collectors and administrators. The programme content, including practical demonstrations, took this into account and was likely to have been of value to all.
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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	3	The community hall in Lybster is the best available venue in the village for a conference of this scale and offers plentiful space for a range of activities. It would not be reasonable to expect the facilities of a purpose-built lecture theatre and in general visibility issues were well managed. Acoustics, however, are poor and use of the PA system (which was not ideal for a conference) is essential if speakers are to be audible throughout the hall. Thought needs to be given to the possibility of providing a PA system for the occasion which is easy for speakers to manage (eg lapel microphones) and includes a roving microphone facility to enable contributions from the audience to be heard by all. The possibility of introducing induction loop facilities also needs consideration.
Information/ interpretive material at venue ²	5	A full conference folder was provided which included a clear programme, further details of speakers, list of participants, local background etc. Tables in the hall allowed for additional information from other organisations to be displayed
Publicity/ pre-publicity ³	4	NLCG has an extensive network, national and international, reflecting the diversity of the conference audience, which receives the brochure, newsletters etc. Information is also available on the attractive website: it is not evident (no links page) how effectively the website is linked in to other relevant websites/portals. This might be reviewed to ensure that publicity is reaching as wide an audience as possible.
Ease of booking and payment	5	Excellent; the overall standard of organisation is consistently high
External signage and signposting	4	As the workshop etc are not open to the general public NLCG has avoided signposting. Participants are provided with maps, but it was commented that because accommodation is so scattered a more detailed map of the village would be helpful
Internal directional signage		Not applicable in such a small venue

¹ Whether the event included workshops, artist's talks and/or discussion group, targeted at pre-school/primary/secondary/tertiary students, >18, >60 etc.

² These include programmes, displays etc., including the range, quality and clarity.

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

Access and provision for disabled people	2	The community hall, on one level with no steps, was likely to be helpful to individuals with mobility issues but no advance information was provided. What the otherwise excellent brochure lacks is any reference to the disability friendliness of the various NLCG venues or a positive statement inviting participants to send advance notice of any special needs. This needs addressing. Similarly although some access information is available on the website this needs amplifying and giving greater prominence; there also appears to be no text-only version of the website suitable for enquirers with limited sight.
Timing of the event	5	Well-trieed and successful timing utilising the weekend between two blocks of masterclasses to allow both sets of course leaders to come together and contribute with other speakers, attracting a broad range of other professional participants to network with the artists engaged in the courses.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g., box office, front of house and bar/catering)	5	The conference was characterised by smooth organisation combined with a warm welcome and attention to the needs and comfort of the participants. The opportunities built into the programme to experience the local culture and surroundings seemed to be well-appreciated.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council funding ⁴	5	Scottish Arts Council logo appropriately used on website, conference programme and pack and other printed material. Additional written acknowledgement in editorial

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.