



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – VISUAL ARTS

Organisation/Venue: Taigh Chearsabhagh North Uist

Title of Event: Josef Tornick Tir A'Mhurain – 50 years on

Type of Event: (e.g. exhibition/workshop/screening/lecture) **Exhibition**

Date of Visit: 2 – 3 December 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).

My overall rating for this show adds up to 55 and average mark is three. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Taigh Chearsabhagh and North Uist and the opportunity have a more in-depth experience of the organisation. I arrived on the Friday and spent most of the afternoon with the arts officer Andy Mackinnon discussing the work of the gallery and the show. In the evening I was invited to attend the AGM for the Tiagh Chearsabhagh Museum and Arts Centre and listen to their proposals for *Highland 2007*.

The exhibition of 38 black and white digital photographs by the photographer Josef Tonick was created from more than a 1000 images that he took whilst visiting the islands in the summer of 2004. They included landscapes, portraits, still life and re-photographing some of the original participants of Paul Strands documentary work in 1954. Josef Tonick seems to have been well received locally and developed friendships with people on the islands which has meant that his work has generated local interest.

I came away from my visit unsure of the curatorial concept or artistic vision of this project but felt that the exhibition in a practical way well executed and well received. I would have liked to have known if this is part of a broader project documenting the changing patterns and effects of contemporary culture on island life.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Emma Nicolson \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 14 Dec 2005

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 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 <sup>1</sup>	3	<p>The artist has a strong vision of the exhibition because he envisages his work as a continuation of the photographer Paul Strands body of work documenting the life of the crofting community on the islands in 1954. I had never heard of this photographer before and there was no further information about the artist or his career available. This would normally have been available from the computer terminal in the café.</p> <p>This is the information that I managed to find on the web about him. Born in Brooklyn, Josef Tornick studied at the State University of New York before receiving his Masters degree from South-western College in Santa Fe, NM. He was the founding member of the Longmont Photo Salon in Longmont, Colorado. He currently lives with his wife, Annie, in Santa Fe, NM.</p>
Curatorial vision/ selection – also indicate if the event has originated from the exhibiting organisation, part of a festival, artist-led, or commissioned	3	This show was instigated by the photographer and organised as a touring exhibition for the Western Isles by the Arts Officer at Taigh Chearsabhagh Lochmaddy, North Uist.
Events available/ groups targeted – workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups, pre-school/ primary/ secondary students, >18,>60 etc	3	Although the Arts Centre does have the facilities and often holds photography workshops there were none specifically organised for this show. A talk by the artist during the opening week as well as a screening of the Alan Lomax <i>Song hunter</i> film by Rogier Kappers. Paul Strand heard Alan Lomax on the radio discussing the island and visited Uist in 1954 which resulted in the original Tir a Mhurian work
Standard of Presentation – use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang	3	<p>The work was very cleanly and traditionally presented, square format black and white digital prints were window mounted behind white card and famed in black wooden frames.</p> <p>The exhibition of 33 works was spread across three different spaces tow white walled gallery spaces and the café area including the stairs to one of the gallery spaces.</p>
Foot Traffic – number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit	3	I did not count anyone in the exhibition whilst I was there on the Friday, apart from visitors to the café and the shop. On the Saturday there were more people in the gallery space.
Audience Reaction – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors' books comments	4	<p>Because of the length of time I spent at the Art Centre I was able to talk with the office staff, staff in the shop and the café and other visitors to the centre. The feedback I received from these informal discussions was all very positive. Most people seemed to think that locals and visitors were interested in seeing this documentary work about the island and felt that it had strong local appeal. Particularly because they recognised people and locations represented. People seemed to be aware of Paul Strands original project.</p> <p>Some of the views expressed in the comments book were;</p> <p><i>"Simple, beautiful, very effective imagery glad I live amongst it."</i></p> <p><i>"Really good, appealing characters, compelling studies"</i></p>

<sup>1</sup> 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

## 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	I think that given its local significance and appeal it seems appropriate to have held this exhibition. Although personally I felt that perhaps it might have been more interesting to commission a photographer to document the island and capture something from Paul Strands original photographic record.
Information/ interpretive material at venue <sup>2</sup>	3	There was some introductory text that had been written by the photographer Josef Tornick. This gave a good personal explanation for the exhibition. I felt that perhaps it needed a foreword written by the Gallery to set the exhibition and artists in context.
Publicity/ pre-publicity <sup>3</sup>	3	The Gallery has a page in the local monthly paper An Paiper and the exhibition and related events were featured in this. It might be interesting to have some publicity materials at the airport in Benbecular. I am sure that this would happen in the summer season, but there is very little reading material to entertain the visitor at the airport.
Ease of booking and payment		N/A
Location of venue	5	The Art Centre is in the heart of the village and on the main road to the Pier where the ferry arrives. However getting there by public transport for visitors with no car would be a problem. A service does exist but very few people know about it!
External signage and signposting	3	The Centre is sign posted on the main street in Lochmaddy.
Internal directional signage	3	There were laminated posters for the exhibition in the centre, behind the shop counter at the entrance and in the café. There was directional signage for the exhibition through out the building
Access and provision for disabled people	4	The venue is fully accessible with a chair lift provided to the upper galleries. There was no large print text provided for the exhibition.
Opening times/ timing of the event	4	Kildonan Museum July – Sept Nunton Steadings Oct – Nov Taigh Chearsabhagh Nov – Dec (opening times:10am to 5pm, Monday to Saturday)
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. welcoming/ informed)	4	I found all the staff extremely friendly, helpful and welcoming. Most expressed a positive reaction to the exhibition. I thoroughly enjoyed my visit to Uist and being able to spend time at the venue.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding <sup>4</sup>	3	SAC logo on card and poster.

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

<sup>3</sup> 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

<sup>4</sup> 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."

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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.