



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – VISUAL ARTS

Organisation/Venue:

Title of Event: **Swimming Aid**

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

Date of Visit: 7 May 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).

This was a very professionally presented and highly absorbing exhibition by an artist whose work I did not know much about beforehand. The starting point for the exhibition was visionary and the work was imaginative and well executed. Interpretation was good, although the catalogue was expensive. I hope to see much more of this excellent artist in the future.

Name: ___ Lisa Kapur _____ Date: ___ / ___ / ___

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 ¹		The exhibition consisted of a series of drawings and works on paper as well as objects in various media, by Glasgow based Swiss-born artist Louise Schmid. The works in the exhibition were inspired by 'The Swimmer', a book by John Cheever. Accompanying the exhibition was an evocative soundtrack by Harold Nono. The works themselves were simple, dreamlike and almost childlike in use of colour and heavy marking. Repeating symbols and markers expressed the themes of the exhibition, which (to me at least), were around journeying, location and transformation as well as the conflict between structural and organic forms. This was a slightly surreal, evocative and powerful exhibition, which encouraged the viewer to absorb themselves in the work and undertake a fascinating narrative journey.
Curatorial vision/ selection – also indicate if the event has originated from the exhibiting organisation, part of a festival, artist-led, or commissioned		The exhibition originated from the Talbot Rice Gallery and was touring to Basle. Given the visionary starting point for the creation of the exhibition, the works complemented each other and acted to create a cohesive whole. The majority of the works were for sale and the variety of work on display meant that a range of collectors would be able to purchase work by this artist, given that the price range was between £350 - £3,000.
Events available/ groups targeted – workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups, pre-school/ primary/ secondary students, >18,>60 etc		Talbot Rice Gallery runs a consistently good education programme. I am aware that an education programme was undertaken to accompany this exhibition although I do not know the details of specific events.
Standard of Presentation – use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang		This was generally very good, although the soundtrack was not playing when I initially entered the gallery. It was a very bright day which meant that the perspex-covered 'Fall Series' was highly reflective to the point that it was occasionally difficult to see the work, but I would say this also added something to the experience of the exhibition, themed as it was around water and liquidity.
Foot Traffic – number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit		There were a number of other visitors to the exhibition at the time of my visit (perhaps 5 or 6). This was a Saturday afternoon on the final day of the exhibition.

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

Audience Reaction – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors' books comments		Other visitors spent a good deal of time with the work and were clearly absorbed by it. Comments in the visitors' book (of which there were many more than I usually encounter in Gallery visitor books) were mixed but generally positive and indicated a range of visitor in terms of type (student, local, tourist etc) and age group. All of this implied an active engagement with the work on display.
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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		This was a very suitable exhibition for the Talbot Rice Gallery, given its mission statement, which is: that it has “a commitment to showing work by Scottish and International artists both in group projects and in monograph exhibitions”. It was also in line with the Gallery’s aim of promoting: “knowledge, understanding and new ideas, realised through thematic exhibitions, events and publications”.
Information/ interpretive material at venue ²		Works were clearly labelled and there was a very informative wall panel, although sadly there were no copies available to take away on the day of my visit. There were both a (bilingual) catalogue and CD on sale to accompany the exhibition. I bought the catalogue, which contained a meandering essay by John Calcutt, which added nothing to my experience of the artist’s work, although the images and general design and layout of the catalogue themselves were very good. At £20, it was perhaps expensive for the average visitor. I would have liked to buy the CD too, but due to cost I felt I had to make a choice between the catalogue or CD.
Publicity/ pre-publicity ³		The exhibition was advertised in the usual listings, I was unaware of other advertising, but this does not mean it didn’t take place.
Ease of booking and payment		N/A admission is free.

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

Location of venue		The Gallery is located within the university of Edinburgh buildings, so is not immediately visible to 'passing trade'. However, it is likely to attract a large number of student visitors.
External signage and signposting		This is appropriate to the style of building in which it is situated.
Internal directional signage		This is good
Access and provision for disabled people		Physical access is good, with a lift both to and within the gallery. Access is also generated via the education programme, although I am unaware of the extent to which this is specifically targeted at people with disabilities.
Opening times/ timing of the event		The exhibition ran for 6 weeks, and the Exhibition opening times of Tuesday – Saturday 10am – 5pm are good.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. welcoming/ informed)		The staff member was very friendly and welcoming.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ⁴		This was acknowledged on all publicity information and on the website.

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.