



Scottish Arts Council

ARTISTIC EVALUATION – VISUAL ARTS

Organisation/Venue: The Travelling Gallery

Title of Event: Real Life Rock Opera Vol. 1

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

Date of Visit: Friday 9 April 2004, Leith Waterworld, Edinburgh

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).

Overall rating

- This was an evocative, thought provoking exhibition, dealing with important and universally interesting issues relating to culture, identity and nationhood
- The work was executed to a high standard and presented within a specially created environment
- The exhibition was touring widely and will have been visited by a large number of people (especially young people) from diverse geographic areas
- There was a good number of visitors from a variety of age groups at the time of my visit
- Interpretation, on all levels, was very good
- Minor maintenance of the exhibition was required

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		<p>This exhibition was part of Ross Sinclair's ongoing work under the banner/brand of 'Real Life' - works questioning/exploring notions of culture and nationhood. Real Life Rock Opera reflects the current obsession with nostalgic musicals (Taboo, ABBA the Musical, etc) and Ross applied this to notions of Scottish Highland culture which are subject to constant nostalgic reinterpretation. The artist had created an installation/environment redolent of both a grand house and church hall. The walls of the travelling gallery were covered in wood chip, and the main body of work consisted of sculptures incorporating antlers, guitars, heraldic emblems and red velvet – a strange mix which worked well and resulted in evocative and thought provoking works. The neon/antler sculptures bore legends such as 'abide with me' and 'Bonnie Mary of Argyll', reflecting the titles of well-known tunes, but placing them in a context which made the viewer reassess them and what they stand for. The soundtrack (also available in CD form for the public to take away) consisted of re-worked versions of old tunes, as well as some new ones, by the artist, performed in a fairly ironic style. I had listened to the CD before attending the exhibition and hadn't particularly liked it, but in the context of the exhibition, the soundtrack made perfect sense. There was also a video work, projecting a fictional look forward at Scotland in the mid 21st century as Scotia – a kind of Truman Show style theme park in which the population became extras in a living history experiment. I found this fascinating and disconcertingly believable.</p>
Curatorial vision/ selection – also indicate if the event has originated from the exhibiting organisation, part of a festival, artist-led, or commissioned		<p>This was a site-specific work, created for the Travelling Gallery. Given the title of the exhibition, placing it in a kind of 'tour bus' setting made perfect sense. I imagine that the artist would have worked closely with the Gallery curator in creating the exhibition and working with the idiosyncrasies of this particular space. The exhibition was well curated in terms of selection of pieces, number of works and creation of an overall 'environment'.</p>
Events available/ groups targeted – workshops, artist's talks, discussion groups, pre-school/ primary/ secondary students, >18,>60 etc		<p>The Travelling Gallery is available to school groups in the areas it visits and I understand that the Gallery staff facilitate these sessions. A music event also took place when the gallery visited the City Art Centre, at which the artist played some of the tracks from the CD. There may have been other events during the run of the exhibition, which I was not aware of. Accessibility is embedded into the concept of the Travelling Gallery.</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

Standard of Presentation – use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang		The overall presentation of the exhibition was good. There were not too many works in the exhibition and they were of an appropriate size to the space. However, at least two of the neon sculptures were not lit and some of the chipboard wall covering had come away in the far corner.
Foot Traffic – number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit		At least 8 people visited the exhibition at the time of my visit. These were very varied in terms of age range, from young children, to elderly people.
Audience Reaction – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors' books comments		I visited at lunchtime, half term, in a busy part of Leith. Many people visited the gallery during the time of my visit and the reactions to the work were extremely good. Several elderly people called in, and reacted well to hearing the old tunes, which helped them make an immediate connection to the work. Children enjoyed the strangeness of the sculptural objects and a thirty-something man liked the fact this exhibition was done 'by the guy from the Soup Dragons'. Visitors' book comments were generally good,

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 created especially for the Travelling Gallery and suited the venue extremely well, as described above.
Information/ interpretative material at venue ²		The video piece acted as a good interpretative tool, as did the free CD, which was being given out to visitors to the exhibition. A resource bank of written information was available, but probably the most important method of interpretation was the use of the two members of staff: they were proactive in approaching visitors and talking to them about the exhibition. This worked extremely well and allowed people to understand more about the artist and his work, which undoubtedly enhanced their enjoyment of the exhibition. The approach was very friendly, casual and non-patronising.
Publicity/ pre-publicity ³		I didn't see any pre-publicity for the exhibition, although I'm sure there was some. Given the breadth of the tours, publicising the exhibition must be a challenge for the Gallery and this must take up a great deal of the organisation's resources.

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

Ease of booking and payment		N/a
Location of venue		Excellent. The Gallery visited a range of locations in Edinburgh, encouraging people to call in whilst at the health centre, library, shop etc.
External signage and signposting		You can't really miss it!
Internal directional signage		Not applicable.
Access and provision for disabled people		I don't know if the bus is accessible for people in wheelchairs? The Gallery is well staffed so that people's individual needs can be catered for, where possible.
Opening times/ timing of the event		Good.
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. welcoming/ informed)		As described above, the staff were extremely welcoming and friendly.
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ⁴		SAC funding was acknowledged.

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.