



Updated June 2007

ARTISTIC EVALUATION

It should be noted the views expressed in this evaluation are intended to represent, as far as possible, an objective aesthetic judgement. Specialist advisors and officers should avoid making judgements based on their own personal tastes and preferences.

Artist/Company: Spencer Finch

Venue: DCA

Title of Event: Gravity Always Wins

Type of Event: Exhibition

Date of Visit: 16 December 2008

Overall Rating: **Excellent - 5**

-*Gravity Always Wins* is Spencer Finch's largest exhibition in the UK to date. The exhibition is made all the more powerful with works which have been specifically created for DCA.

-The technical execution and quality of materials employed in the work is of a very high standard.

-The film and accompanying published interview where the artist makes his intentions clear enhances the exhibition experience.

-The artist's scientific methods of recording and more subjective embodiments of knowledge are highly appropriate and stimulating for DCA's range of arts and academic audiences.

Name: Maureen Finn Date: 16/1/2009

Specialist Advisor X

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 above. 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 will form evidence for the Artistic Leadership and Public Engagement sections of the Quality Framework and 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 Joint Board to report on the overall performance of its 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:

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p>Vision and imagination of work - Quality of ideas, skills in execution; if you've seen the work of this artist(s)/ company before, please comment on the comparison.</p>	5	<p><i>Gravity Always Wins</i> is a large-scale retrospective exhibition (mainly a set of major installations) by American artist Spencer Finch. It is his largest exhibition in the UK to date. He enjoys a high degree of critical regard, through museum collections and exhibitions, and prominent private gallery support. In a useful introductory film the artist articulates his interest in making work that explores the many boundaries between science, perception, memory, poetry and visual arts. He seeks to investigate very specific places and historical ideas using precise instrumentation and reconstruction through a variety of media, whilst not being blind to the poetics and folly of such enterprises. The artist is generous in sharing his ideas, whilst also creating space for open-ended interpretation. For example, in the large work <i>Sunlight in an empty room</i> we learn of several parallel connections, generally through the writing of Emily Dickinson and her interest in nature, with a specific recreation by Finch of the shadow of a cloud in her garden.</p> <p>In <i>8,000 Shades of Blue</i>, a systematic enquiry into colour inspired by the writing of David Hume, Finch again uses a set of simple visual techniques to encourage among exhibition viewers subtle perceptual appreciation of colour values. His method is both highly pragmatic and poetically charged.</p> <p>The film and accompanying published interview with the artist makes clear the delicate crossing of borders between scientific methods of recording and more subjective embodiments of knowledge. This is all achieved with a light touch.</p> <p>The technical execution and quality of materials employed in the work is of a very high standard.</p>
All (if relevant)	<p>Curatorial/ programming vision/ selection Please indicate how the event originated eg from the exhibiting/ producing organisation, artist-led or commissioned.</p> <p>If the event is part of a Festival, please say how it contributes to the overall programme.</p>	5	<p>There is an increasing number of high quality artists exploring the perceptual and embodied aspects of scientific phenomena in contemporary art at the moment (Carsten Höller and Olafur Eliasson, for example). There is also a programming connection with earlier exhibitions with scientific themes, in particular Christine Borland's one-person show in 1999 and Elizabeth Ogilvie's in 2005.</p> <p>This exhibition by Finch has been created specifically for DCA, with many of the large existing works being reconfigured for the spaces offered in this venue. The collaboration with the partner exhibition by Finch at Glasgow's The Common Guild indicates a likely link with the previous Curator</p>

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
			<p>at DCA.</p> <p>Conceptually some of the work has been influenced by Scotland's very particular relationship with progressive thinking in the arts and sciences since the Scottish Enlightenment. Finch has exhibited in Scotland before – at the Collective Gallery, Edinburgh in 1995.</p>
All	<p>Success of event against stated aims - in the programme or other printed material, including how well it communicated the artistic themes.</p> <p>Education events – see ¹below for guidance</p>		<p>Since its inauguration, DCA has become a leading venue for high quality and ambitious one-person shows. This exhibition exemplifies that stated aim. The overwhelming impact of the first work in Gallery One immediately leaves the viewer curious about Finch's artistic process. We learn from Finch that he is content for the form of his works to come together in the idea. The huge cloud hanging overhead casting a beautiful shadow in the white of the gallery is testament to this ambition.</p>
All	<p>Performers/tutors - technical standard, performance skills and ability to communicate and engage.</p> <p>Where performers are not trained, please reflect this in your comments.</p>		<p>The range of materials and techniques, and their inherent interactive qualities, succeed in engaging visitors initially on a purely visual level. Further investigation reveals tiers of meaning.</p>
Dance, Theatre	<p>Choreography/Use of choreography - originality, use of space, number and use of dancers, length of piece, etc</p>		
Theatre	<p>Script – particularly in relation to new work or second productions. Relevant to classics where the original has been substantially changed.</p>		
Theatre, Dance	<p>Direction - Concerns issues of interpretation, casting and presentation.</p>		
Dance, Theatre	<p>Use of music – appropriateness and effect of sound or music (whole/part, live/recorded) to the production.</p>		
Dance, Theatre	<p>Design – costume, set, lighting. Take into account how appropriate the design is in relation to the venue and, where appropriate, the touring schedule.</p>		

¹ Education is a bridge between artform excellence and increased access and participation, and it is people centred. Providing opportunities for learning and progressing in an artform or using an artform to address other, non-artistic, outcomes are equally valid; in either case a high quality strategic approach is required in order to benefit the participants and the organisation. Delivery can be through workshops, post/pre-show discussions, outreach work, etc aimed at any age group.

Artform	Criteria	Rating	Comments and key reasons for rating
All	<p>Quality of Presentation/Engagement</p> <p>Performing Arts - technical presentation of the production (eg lighting and sound cues, etc).</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts - Use of equipment, space and overall layout/hang</p> <p>Education events - relevance/ appropriateness of presentation and teaching methodology (one to one, group, child centred); details of participant group and activity, including genre.</p>	5	<p>The quality of presentation is of a very high standard – the large suite of galleries allowing space for these large-scale installations to breathe but also to subtly connect with each other through the rooms. The precision of the works themselves demands such highly specified installation standards. The intense colours and finishes used by the artist benefits greatly from being exhibited in large ‘white cube’ spaces.</p>
All	<p>Audience</p> <p>Performing Arts - appropriateness of the production for the audience/ participants; estimate the size and reaction</p> <p>Crafts/Visual Arts – time spent, interest, activity, and visitors’ books comments, number of visitors/ participants at the time of visit</p> <p>Education/learning – pre-event involvement, participants/ schoolteachers reaction, understanding, commitment, enthusiasm, number involved, etc</p>		<p>The reading area, resourced with the artists’ film and various related publications, encourages visitors to remain longer in the venue. I attended midweek towards the end of the exhibition run and the gallery was fairly quiet although there was a general buzz around the building.</p>
All	<p>Additional Interpretative activity – what activities were available to enhance the experience of the event eg workshops, artist’s talks, discussion groups? Please indicate age-groups targeted.</p>	4	<p>Spencer Finch gave a talk about his work in association with Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art. Nicholas Wade, Professor of Visual Psychology at University of Dundee led a gallery discussion. Both event would be targeted at student, art specialist and adult groups. DCA gallery attendants are trained to give information when approached.</p>
All	<p>Outcomes of education activity – what learning/skills development took place? What did participants take away with them? Are education resources being provided for follow up work? Is it strategically linked to the curriculum (formal or informal)?</p>	5	<p>The reading room contained a good range of titles to encourage further study such as Wittgenstein’s <i>Remarks on Colours</i> or Martin Kemp’s <i>The Science of Art</i>. The video offered an accessible introduction to the artist and his work for non-specialists. The website contained a small installation video clip and additional interpretation.</p>

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. Please try to view the venue and the services, and interpretative material as though you had never visited it before eg if you did not know the venue's location, how easy would it be to find your way there, and to find your way around once you had arrived?

Criteria	Comment
Suitability of the venue for the event	The venue was ideal for this type of large installation-based exhibition.
Information/ interpretive material at venue - programmes, displays etc.	The reading area was well resourced with a range of publications relating to various aspects of the work, including the Scottish Enlightenment and the science of colour.
Publicity/ pre-publicity –leaflets, posters, websites, etc. What is produced, is it easy to understand and where can you get the information? Please be alert to the publicity available prior to your visit to the event and comment on the company/organisation's website.	The website highlights the exhibition and contains valuable pre- and post-visit information- also about other exhibitions - past and future. The exhibition information leaflet is also available as a pdf. I found it initially difficult to navigate to past exhibitions due to the design, variety of events and complexity of the site layout. Although visually stimulating the site would benefit from some clarity on the home page.
Ease of booking and payment	
Location of venue – eg is it easy to find? Is it on a main transport route?	Yes
External signage and signposting	Clear
Internal directional signage	Signage for the exhibition spaces is clear
Access and provision for disabled people – what can you see?	DCA is accessible with ramps and a lift from the rear entrance.
Timing of the event – was the length appropriate? Did the start and finish time seem to be appropriate for the audience?	
Customer service - quality and efficiency of staff (e.g. box office, front of house, bar and/or catering)	
Acknowledgement of Scottish Arts Council Funding ²	SAC acknowledged on all materials.

² In press releases, at launches, on all published materials (including leaflets, brochures, programmes, posters, company's website, notices display, exhibition materials, websites and advertising, recordings, publications, video, broadcasts, computer programmes etc.) Where the event is publicised in the programme brochure of another organisation (eg venue, gallery, etc) then SAC acknowledgement should appear against the particular programme entry for this event.



Scottish **Arts** Council

3. Organisation's Comments (optional)

This is the organisation's opportunity to respond to points raised within this assessment. Please do not feel obliged to fill this section in. In the spirit of the Quality Framework, we would ask that any comments are self-evaluating, providing an insight as to why, if there is, a major disagreement of response between the organisation and the evaluation, in a constructive way.

This will not alter the rating given by the assessment, but will allow the organisation the opportunity to give their opinion/feedback. The Scottish Arts Council reserves the right to edit comments if they are deemed to be libellous or defamatory.

As the Scottish Arts Council implements the Quality Framework internally, we intend to publish artistic evaluations on organisations that we support regularly on our website. The final artistic evaluation, including the organisation's response will be published on a quarterly basis on our website.

Please keep your response to max **500 words**. If we do not hear from you in 15 days, we will assume that you do not want to respond.

