

The Fruitmarket Gallery

Response to Cultural Commission
Phase 1 of consultation process

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Where we are – cultural poverty

The Fruitmarket Gallery, one of Scotland's most successful and highest profile arts venues, is currently not funded to deliver its primary function. It receives no money to make exhibitions, commission new work, provide interpretative tools, run an education programme or publish exhibition catalogues or guides.

The Fruitmarket Gallery's sole source of public funds is the Scottish Arts Council (although acknowledged by Edinburgh City Council as an integral part of Edinburgh's visual arts infrastructure, it receives no council funding, but must instead pay the city £46,000 per year in rent).

In 2004-05, The Fruitmarket Gallery's projected overall expenditure is £640,000. SAC funding in the year 2004-05 was £370,000. This is insufficient even to cover salaries and the costs involved in running and maintaining the building, leaving the Gallery with £270,000 to raise for the shortfall, plus the entire creative programme. The Gallery attempts to do this through its commercial activities (bookshop and café, between them projected to net £70,000 in 2004-05), and through commercial sponsorship and charitable donation.

A commercial and charitable fundraising target of £200,000 is more than a challenge. Even were commercial sponsorship easier to come by in Scotland's current economic climate, expecting a gallery of the stature of The Fruitmarket Gallery to survive only by raising such a sum fosters a climate of cultural poverty and desperation rather than cultural confidence. The Fruitmarket Gallery is by no means alone in this situation, which gives our cultural institutions the status of beggars rather than providers, and makes creative thinking, planning and delivering on gallery aims and objectives and audience rights and entitlements well-nigh impossible.

The Fruitmarket Gallery is passionately committed to the rights of audiences and artists, and well-placed to deliver on those rights. Audiences have a right to regular and meaningful access to art of the highest quality, and artists have a right to have the development and presentation of their work properly supported.

The Gallery's principal aim is to find the most appropriate way to bring artists and audiences together, and in order to do this it prioritises the following objectives:

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| Exhibitions | 5 exhibitions per year of new and existing work, by Scottish and international artists, in solo and group presentations |
| Commissions | enabling artists' developing ideas to achieve tangible form in presentation to an audience |
| Interpretation | giving audiences the tools to access art for themselves, encouraging questions and supporting debate |
| Education | more formal sessions, in a mix of open and closed access groups, exploring issues raised in art with audiences of all ages, backgrounds and knowledge levels, in talks, symposia and workshops |
| Publishing | extending the reach of all the Gallery's creative activity, in a range of publications including free exhibition guides, inexpensive education publications, exhibition catalogues and artist's monographs. |

The Fruitmarket Gallery sets standards for evaluating ideas for the creative programme, believing that audiences have a right to a quality experience on each visit. Encounters with art at The Fruitmarket Gallery (whether through an exhibition, commission, education event or publication) should always be:

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| Memorable | the experience should linger in the mind of the audience, informing their understanding of things other than the experience itself |
| Moving | it should expand beyond the context of its immediate presentation, forming associations with the present and future ideas and experience of the audience |
| Meaningful | It should express ideas, and allow for engagement on a variety of levels, offering something satisfying for art and non-art specialist audiences |
| Succinct | Its means of expression should be appropriate for its idea |

Consistent It should operate within a context which adds up to a sustained and sustainable project

With no funding to deliver any of its objectives, however, the Gallery's programming risks following funding agendas rather than fulfilling creative criteria, with exhibitions, commissions, publications and education events designed to raise money rather than standards and expectations.

Where we could be - cultural confidence

The mechanism for delivery on the rights and expectations of audiences and artists already exists in Scotland, in the strong and creative network of publicly-funded museums and galleries of which the Fruitmarket Gallery is a part. The institutional infrastructure is a key to the identification and delivery of cultural rights for all. There resides the skill, knowledge and creativity to identify exhibition, commissioning, education, interpretation and publishing programmes properly to support and develop Scotland's rich resource of creative artists and ambitious and adventurous audiences.

At the moment, very few of Scotland's visual arts institutions are funded to deliver what one might see as their core function - the presentation of art to audiences. Even the Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art in Edinburgh, the leader in the field of modern and contemporary art, has no budget to mount exhibitions, but must fund raise for each new project.

If Scotland's museums and galleries were properly funded to deliver on their aims and objectives, then the concept of 'cultural rights for the Scottish citizen, and those of its creative community' might have some meaning.

Karen

From: Fiona Bradley [fiona@fruitmarket.co.uk]
Sent: 21 September 2004 16:46
To: info
Subject: Response to Cultural Commission consultation[Scanned]



Feedback FMF
September 2004.doc.

Dear cultural commission

Please find attached an initial response to the cultural commission's enquiry from The Fruitmarket Gallery, Edinburgh.

Many thanks

Fiona

Fiona Bradley
Director, Fruitmarket Gallery
T: 0131 226 8187
F: 0131 220 3130
fiona@fruitmarket.co.uk