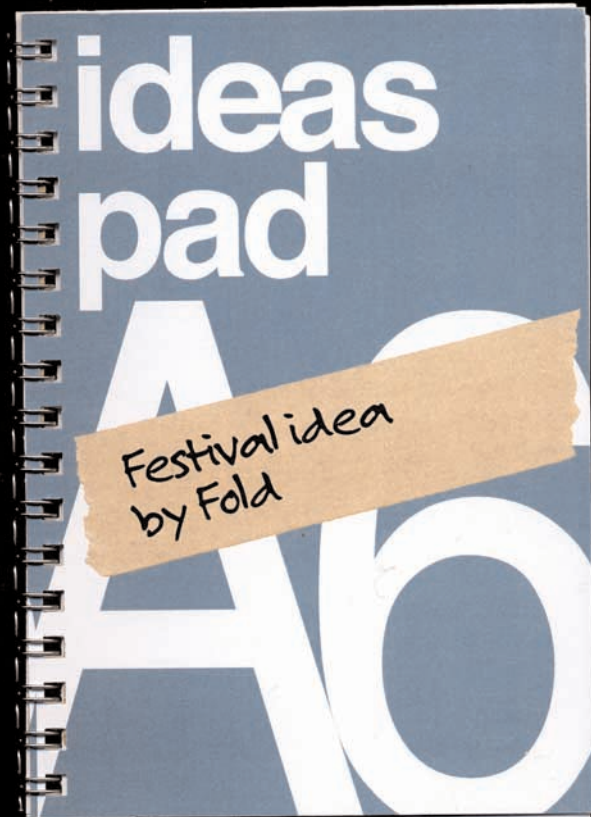


Art Festival
report

ART SUMMER

RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS

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FOLD HAD A VISION. A vision of artists standing up and waving their collective arms about shouting Look at ME! A vision celebrating the richness of Cumbria's cultural tapestry, its ability to inspire generations of artists from Ruskin to Schwitters to the iMac and to Turner-prize-winners. It was a vision about art and about artists.

This research was to build upon the idea of a festival of artist-led events across the county. and develop the idea through consultation.

Throughout the report the word **FESTIVAL** has been liberally applied to mean a coordinated event of a unified collection of individual and unique events. The word **FESTIVAL** in some sense may be misleading inferring an event conceived and carried out by a single organisation or committee, with an entrance fee, bunting and dripping ice-cream cones. The **FESTIVAL** outlined here is none of those.

f consultation feedback

R report recommendations

A detailed report of the research, including statistical analysis can be found online at: www.foldgallery.co.uk/publications

I S THERE SUPPORT FOR A COUNTYWIDE INITIATIVE?

Supportive of the idea -

98%

ARTIST-LED

- ① Most artists felt an artist-led approach was an essential part of the proposed festival
- ② Artists want control of their own projects from conception to delivery
- ③ There was a strong bias towards creating cutting-edge work

THE EVENT MUST BE ARTIST-LED. This will shift the power giving artists control of their own 'performance'. In turn, this will encourage the quality and diversity of proposals. Strong grass roots involvement will lead the future growth of the festival and secure its future sustainability. Any attempt by larger bodies to usurp the running of events will dilute the essence of the festival – that of artists wanting to raise their profile on their own terms. The purpose of exhibiting must be re-evaluated. Direct sales are not necessarily the major incentive for artists to participate. There is huge potential for raising the profile of participating artists on a national and international level. Creating site-specific work or displaying work in an innovative fashion will expose their potential to a greater audience, including curators, collectors and critics. The long-term benefits outweigh short-term financial gain i.e. it is more beneficial to get a £6,000 commission later in the year than to sell a piece for £200 with a real profit value of less. By encouraging new and exciting work, the festival will elevate artistic practice across the county by giving artists aspiration and promote innovation.

Please return to Inland Revenue,
Glasgow, Great Britain, G70 5TT

PRIVATE

- Quality & appropriateness of the publicity are the most important keys to a successful festival.
- "Joined Up" marketing of events would have a greater impact than the sum of individual events.
- Get the publicity right - out early on in the year, and beyond political boundaries of the county.
- Badly targeted publicity = no visitors.

EFFECTIVE AND ADEQUATE MARKETING AND PUBLICITY IS ESSENTIAL. Poor quality marketing and publicity material has a detrimental effect on the perception of the quality of work produced in the county. A campaign worthy of a D&AD awards submission is both a necessity and a welcome challenge to designers.

The event must be targeted effectively at a local level to gain community support and involvement and to prevent the event from being seen as elitist or tourist-centred.

The visual awareness, creativity and passion of artists should be harnessed to stimulate fresh, alternative ideas and add ownership to both the marketing and festival as a whole. Artists' ability to think subversively and innovatively should be used to promote the event beyond traditional art venues, attracting new audiences and highlighting the potential of artists' skills beyond the creation of works of art.

Site-specific work and installations create opportunities for marketing and publicity. There is the potential for an artist-led advertising campaign to become an event in itself.

A staggered marketing campaign allows artists and groups to secure and confirm funding beyond the initial selection deadline. A website would keep visitors up to date with events as they are confirmed.

Bill board exhibitions 'micro' galleries projects with community get students work into the public eye programme of contemporary work in print gallery collaboration with KWoA event and programme show work locally project work onto buildings or outside screen find local artists and promote gallery joint installations in local pubs aswell as individual projects art that isn't tent installation barrow and middlesborough twin towns!local cinema projects installation in public gardens sheep parade across N. England interventions new work installation in front garden Farm machine project sugar cube wrappers travelling cinemas felt pub installation agricultural projects car park tickets drawing conference/barn at b. s. s. n. t. h. w. a. i. t. e. for gallery space installation of sculpture every year to see how people interact. A. i. a. l. a. c. e. helicopter reporting with Border TV. C. b. i. n. i. n. g. i. l. l. e. s. installed in remote places educational involvement installation @ Fold Creative recreation days kite making and camera flying workshops best death competition and dead man's fall four way video installation of a walk through an urban centre and dialogue between urban and rural hubs poetry read from a mountain top beamed to speakers in towns sculptures of romantic poets destroyed in a variety of different ways small microphones in woodland areas recording and playing natural sounds at greater volumes enormous sand sculpted feet weeb sculptures arranged and rearranged by the public and weeb skittles mirror distortions residencies with Tanzanian artists projects linked with the big draw with schools changing faces of dent creating dialogue panoramic postcards sheep parade

ideas

THE EVENT SHOULD ENCOURAGE INNOVATION. The Festival provides a perfect opportunity to show work of an innovative nature that will draw its own publicity.

Open studios programmes have provided a good model for audiences to access work and artists to exhibit. However, this model is not all encompassing and there is a need for more than conventional exhibiting spaces to generate ideas and interest. By focusing on innovative approaches to showing work, artists will be challenged and audiences intrigued. The use of alternative spaces will stimulate discussion among visitors and change perceptions of the art produced in Cumbria. Encouraging one-off installations and opportunities for artists to show work in alternative venues – pubs, supermarkets, dry-stone walls etc. will maximise the potential for artist and visitor participation and take “art to the masses”, whilst providing opportunities for artists outside studio groups and those that do not have a ‘studio’.

The festival will raise the profile of artists from rural and isolated areas and help change the relationship between Cumbria and “tweeness”.

Case study: Sheffield Open Up 2003.

The most visited event was a poet who opened up a shed on his allotment as part of an Open Studios tour.



1. Without some form of quality control, the whole event is cheapened - quality over quantity will make the festival a success.
2. Selection criteria are essential + must be crystal clear to avoid value & taste judgements.
3. Artists could be invited in the 1st year to set a standard & then selection could be used subsequently.
4. Amateur artists are differentiated from professional artists and should be excluded.

Q UALITY MUST BE MAINTAINED AND MONITORED.

There must be a clear and transparent selection or curatorial policy to ensure that the work included is of a sufficiently high calibre, however, a balance must be struck to prevent a perception of art snobbery and elitism that would deter new audiences and suffer a powerful backlash from unsuccessful artists.

That work must be presented in an innovative way, is an easily qualifyable criteria that avoids making value judgements on the work. It provides an opportunity for artists to create their own events rather than just showing their work: it is no longer enough to say, "Come and see my pictures". The variety of presentation methods unifies the events and creates a marketable 'twist' making it easy to publicise and generate interest.

Training and assistance must be provided to improve the presentation and overall quality of the events.

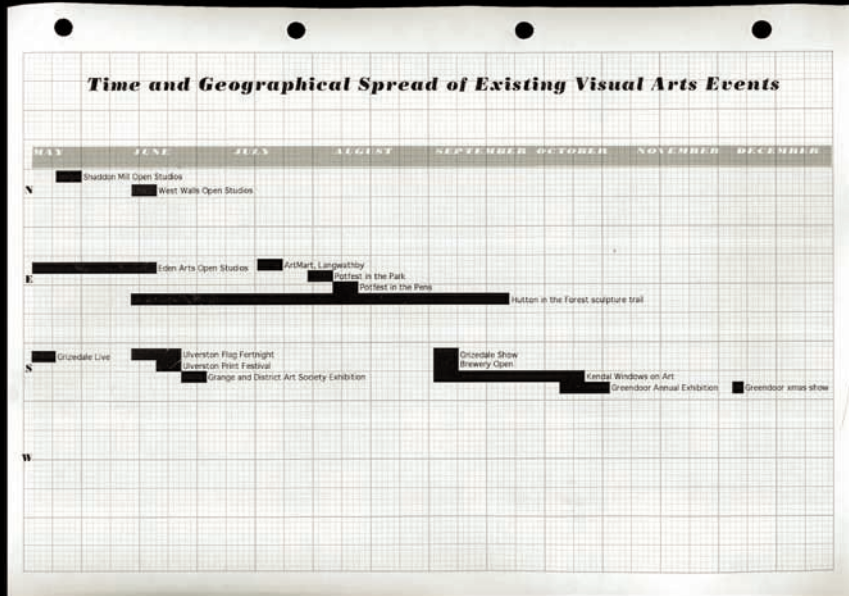
Possible partner for training: Cumbria Cultural Skills Partnership.

25-34 age bracket accounts for 23% of UK visitors to Cumbria* and 22% of Overseas visitors**
35-44 age bracket accounts for 22% of UK visitors* and 18% of Overseas visitors**.
55 - 64 age bracket accounts for only 14% of UK visitors*.
68% of visitors fall into socio-economic groups ABC1 (top 1/3 earners)*

THE EVENT MUST ATTRACT BOTH A LOCAL AUDIENCE AND VISITORS. The festival must be accessible to local audiences. Only if there is a “buzz” locally will visitors from further afield be attracted to an event. Local relevancy is therefore key to the festival’s success.

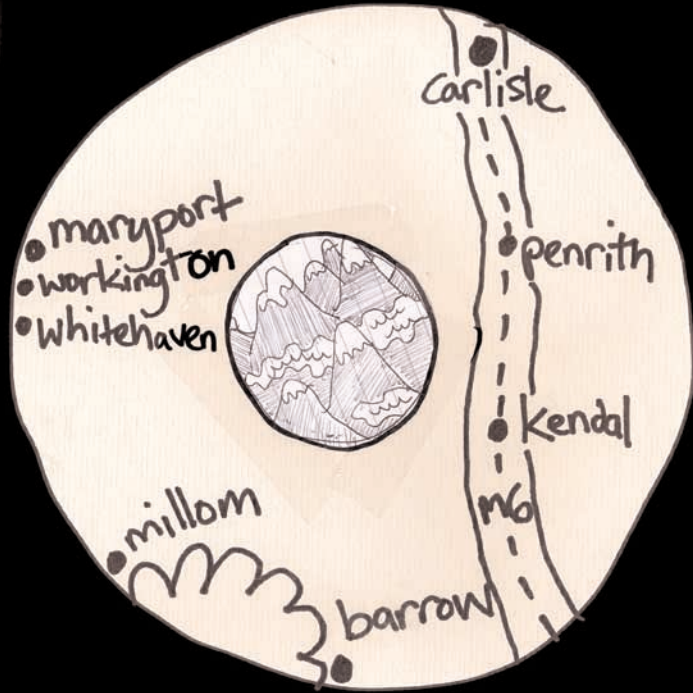
One or two large scale, high profile events will draw audiences to the festival from across the region and potentially overseas. High profile events will have a knock-on benefit to smaller scale artists’ events in demonstrating the artistic process at all levels. The festival must include a range of events of all sizes to appeal initially to the most number of people and to celebrate the vibrancy of art in the region. Existing visual arts events are evenly spread across the calendar from May to November. Education establishments indicated that September and October are the best months for involvement. May and September are “shoulder” months with a traditional change in visitor types. May and September are also the driest months weather wise. A ten-week period from the middle of August to the Middle of October will straddle traditional tourist seasons with more local visitor seasons and attract the widest range of visitors from outside the area. An event that ran into October will add to the events calendar in an otherwise quiet month for festivals.

F



THE FESTIVAL MUST WORK WITH OTHER FESTIVALS AND EVENTS. A rolling programme of Focus weekends should be developed with each area of the county to coincide with existing local events. This creates the opportunity for attracting audiences that might not usually visit arts events, and places the art experience directly with this audience. Artists should be encouraged to work with existing events, to raise the profile of art at a local level and in new contexts, and develop new partnerships. Focus weekends would also aid in shifting the balance of events to help traditionally less visited areas appear on a level footing.

R



THE CUMBRIAN DOUGHNUT

THE EVENT SHOULD THINK OUTSIDE THE BORDERS. The festival should 'bleed' across the political borders of the county, making the event outward looking and developing strong links outside the region: this is to become increasingly important with the proposed regional assemblies. Establishing strong dialogue with the North East, South West Scotland and Yorkshire regions will set a precedent for outward looking and forward thinking projects in rural areas.

Artists from outside the area should be invited to participate on a number of projects as a way of forging new links and to introduce another opportunity for raising awareness of the festival. Cultural exchange programmes working with similar events in urban and rural areas both in the UK and internationally would add a new dimension to the work on show and enable artists from the county to participate and collaborate on an international level. Caution, however must be taken not to lose the 'home-grown' focus of the scheme to maintain local credibility and avoid marginalising local artists.

- ✓ V. Good opportunity to create new partnerships.
- Artists want informative dialogue
- Artists collaborating with businesses, public, other artists and arts organisations both within & outside the county.

COLLABORATION AND COORDINATION ARE **E**SSENTIAL. A coordinated marketing strategy is essential to highlight the wealth of contemporary and quality arts practice currently available across the breadth of the county. Acknowledgement of the work of other arts organisations and galleries via a central marketing strategy – both in print and on an easily updateable website - will raise the profile of existing arts activity and create further opportunities for artists to add to the fabric of a vibrant arts community. Whilst each operates its own set of specific objectives, all organisations and artists are united by the desire to show their work to the largest possible audience. Collaboration and active involvement between individual artists, clusters and studio groups with businesses, education, the viewing public and established arts organisations is essential to create new dialogue and new audiences. Support must be given to new clusters of artists, particularly in under represented areas – West Cumbria and Morecambe Bay. There are a number of studies that demonstrate the benefits of artists working together to promote their work and practice of this kind is to be encouraged across the county.

- A countywide festival will be achievable + manageable provided that its organisation is tight + structured.
- Central support mechanism should be put in place for artists wanting assistance with funding applications, project management + local publicity - (may be reserve of LADA's or County Visual Arts Officer)
- May run out of control if you take on too much responsibility
- Don't try to include everything - too much variety may = fractured event

THE FESTIVAL MUST BE WELL ORGANISED AND RESOURCED. Though the festival is about individual artists and groups' initiatives, the facilitation of the overall event must be led from the front. A full range of support for artists must be made available.

DEMAND

Timetabling / programming.....

Preparing Funding proposals.....

Project management.....

Funding for individual projects.....

Publicity.....

Distribution of Marketing Material..

SUPPORT

Facilitators

Facilitators, LADAs, CCSP

Facilitators, LADAs, CCSP

LADAs, ACE(NW), Leader +, DEFRA etc.

Facilitators, CCSP, DMO

Artists, LADAs, CCC, DMO

A festival coordinator post should be created to offer advice and support to participating artists and provide a single contact point for the facilitation of the events. The coordinator would signpost artists to the most appropriate information, resources and skills in conjunction with The Cumbria Network for artists.

CCSP - Cumbria Cultural Skills Partnership; LADAs - Local Arts Development Agencies; ACE(NW) - Arts Council England (North West); DEFRA - Department for the Environment, Farming and Rural Affairs; CCC - Cumbria County Council; DMO - Cumbria Destination Management Organisation (Tourist Board)

F

POSTAGE PAID
 1st
 2000
 GREAT BRITAIN

(i) Universally agreed that there's too much talking going on in the arts scene in the country + not enough action. If the festival idea isn't acted on in the near future, it will ~~lose~~ lose support.

(ii) Though artist may be keen initially - they may not deliver the goods.

(iii) If it goes on too long, artists + audiences may lose interest.

(iv) There might be a shortage of like minded people.

lit
 Artist boredom

R

SUSTAINABILITY MUST BE BUILT IN. The festival needs to be built up over a number of years to establish a solid foundation of support. It is important, as an artist-led event that the festival is allowed to 'fail' or be less successful in its first couple of years provided that sufficient qualitative evaluation is carried out quickly after the event to identify problems, find solutions and build on strengths. Constant qualitative evaluation and experimentation is an artists approach to problem solving and one that will ensure creativity and innovation in delivery that will ultimately be the success of the festival. Securing funding for the first three years will allow the energies of the artists to be channelled into developing an exciting and original programme rather than constantly fund-raising. An established and exciting festival would be a more viable vehicle for corporate sponsorship and involvement and would therefore aim to be less reliant on grant subsidy. In order to allay fears that there is "too much discussion and not enough action", it is important that a festival be organised for September 2004. This would not only maintain the interest and momentum gained during this research, but also serve as a developmental model for a full size festival in 2005. A 2004 festival would necessarily be in a much-reduced scale, possibly over a shorter time span, however, all the above recommendations still stand and the festival must not be treated as second best – merely compact.

Design by Fold

TYPESET IN NEW BASKERVILLE AND TRADE GOTHIC

Printed by Cerberus : (017683) 72070



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