

Mise en Scene au Chateau

Guy vEale: Who is involved in Mise en Scene, and how did the idea for an event that includes mixing film screenings, music performances and exhibitions come together?

Karen Veitch: The idea was thought up by a mate Yvonne, she asked me to come on board to see what we could manage to organise. We wanted to give film makers in Glasgow (and, as it turned out, abroad) a platform to have their work screened. We realise that it's difficult for budding film makers to get their work shown in Glasgow, and along with nights such as Café Flicker at Glasgow Media Access Centre [see www.variant.org.uk/6texts/Sound_Vision.html] and groups such as Bungle, there are not too many opportunities.

The original idea was to put on a screening in the Botanic Gardens (which may still happen this summer) however due to the Glasgow weather and the fact that in the summer it doesn't get dark 'til about 11pm, we opted for hosting the screenings in our friends' arts studios, the *Chateau*.

There are a few of us involved in making these nights happen and people can get as involved as they want (we realise that it is difficult to be completely involved all the time –this is all done in our spare time). There are a few of us dedicated to the preparations, from making the film submis-



sions posters, to getting them out, to watching all the films, to then sorting out the PR for the actual night, to organising the films onto one format. More people get on board when it comes to preparing the space for the night. At the *Chateau* this can take days!—tidying; blacking out windows; heaving chairs and the *Mise* purple cushions, carpets and sofas about; and walking up and down 6 flights of stairs hundreds of times! And we also have people who get involved for the night—sound system and djs; caroline, who is our technical wizard; the posse who run the café (popcorn, toasts and we even had tapas at one of the nights); performers and film makers. All have made these nights possible...

Robb Mitchell: Basically, to get going a community of creative folk. Through the *Chateau*, making studio facilities cheaper and more interesting, exciting even in terms of range of activities/personnel, seemed to offer a means to creating a thriving work and play atmosphere. A low rent deal on the building as a whole held out the promise of allowing those sharing the rent to actually be using the building and getting to know each other all the more—as opposed to doing extra shifts at the call centre or restaurant.

The hope was to bring together ideas and knowledge, energy, support and resources (e.g. sharing tools) to help all involved further themselves—not necessarily in a careeristic sense. This exchange and buzz functions even on the most simplistic level—just a great (perhaps the best?)

way of passing the time.

And it was hoped that this would both feed off and into some interesting events. Ones in which the audience might say more to other casual acquaintances. We wanted to try and really give people something to talk about, so there's a bit more of the "Hey look at that!" and "What if...?"s. Possibly even some "Why don't we...?"s.

It is a little over common for event organisers to promise something in which all art forms come together, but then with few resources to be devoted to anything other than the main musical attractions. Thus many multi-arts events become a means for unwaged artists providing the labour and materials for a commercial club night's decor. The balance of musicians, artists and designers amongst the *Chateau* founders offered the opportunity for more equal and thriving relationships between different fields.

We didn't think Glasgow needed another big unfriendly space.

People always talk about lack of exhibition space but it seems that if people have the time and resources (that's quite a big "if", I know) and they really want to show work then they always find a way to do so.

For a long time I have seen the lack of any meaningful exchange between exhibitor and audience as a bigger problem. Having more galleries doesn't necessarily help in that respect—in might even make it worse.

A sizeable venue operated by thoughtful folk doing things for the love of it seemed to offer the possibility of actually making people appreciate, (I don't really like the word "access" but okay here it is...) access, respond and even give feedback, to whatever is shown or happens.

A large multi-roomed venue could host extended events and thus keep the audience together for a duration far beyond the standard busy hour or so of an exhibition opening. This would give people a chance to relax and look at things 'properly'—that is not to prescribe to viewers that they must concentrate purely on the work shown at the expense of all other sensations. Often revelations of deeper understanding can occur as one drifts in and out of attentiveness, a bit like the lyrics of a song taking shape whilst watching a movie, or having an idea for a design whilst being half asleep—and standing in an exhibition looking at art is a bit like asking the sales assistant in a record shop to play you snippets of unfamiliar tracks.

The scale of venue appeared to offer plenty of room for both local and not local, popular and unpopular performers/artists of all kinds to appear/show simultaneously, whether in collaboration or in parallel. Also non-art audiences are much more likely to give an honest (often too honest?) appraisal of an art work.

If you show non local artists by themselves, almost no-one comes to the exhibition. If you show local artists, the same old people come all the time. Likewise, with mixing practitioners from different genres/disciplines. Exhibitions' openings mixed with musical performances is not an original format but to do it large scale in a creative and friendly manner seemed worth a shot.

Both the dominant formats for showcasing "emerging" practitioners in these genres, namely the so-called DIY exhibition opening and the small gig, have many similarities. Their main value and appeal lies in their sociable function rather than the audience attending for pure stimulation. At exhibition openings, at least half of the audience members stand with their backs to the work and give by far the bulk of their attention to fellow attendees (more when the work is exclusively wall based). Similarly at small gigs, the audience can often seem to be attending far more for a chat (and sometimes a pose) before, after and normally during a performance.

Getting a music "crowd" along to an exhibition and a visual arts "crowd" along to a gig, offered exciting possibilities of increasing the size not just

of audiences but the attention given to performers/works. Respectful of each other's territories, both groups would probably pay much more attention to the work of the less familiar format than they would to that of their own "scene".

The quality of the artists' and musicians' wares often seem to suffer from the formal and technical constraints imposed by the dominant formats. That is to say, work often appears much more interesting and enjoyable in its private studio/band-practice setting than in a low-to-no budget public exposition. This is without mentioning the appeal of alcohol supplied at both functions, i.e. either free/very cheap at exhibitions and unlimited in the case of music events without the restrictions on taking drinks into performances common to theatres and cinemas.

Most performance work and more classical musical styles demand a more intensive, sit down, shut up and actually look and listen at the work. Which probably explains why Glasgow's rock/dance music and art scenes are so close, compared to the much weaker links between any of these and the theatre and more formal musical styles. Recently though groups of artists like *EmergeD*, *Market Gallery* and *Silencio* have gone some way to bringing emerging performance and visual practitioners together.

GeV: Why does *Mise en Scene* differ from regular, short film screenings? Can you give a brief overview of previous *Mise en Scene* events? What sort of criteria would you/do you have in mind for submissions? Are there any rules or definitions of what is admissible, or constraints upon the content or structure?

KV: The films we've had entered into *Mise en Scene* have varied greatly. At first we wanted it to be short films with a political or social comment, however seeing the submissions we realised there were a lot of films out there made with a purely artistic or experimental point-of-view, or even made just for fun! We then decided to expand on our original thought to include these—so you can expect to see a whole variety of films. After the first film night we also expanded to include performances and installations, which gave the night even more of a buzz. Live music was also included in the second *Mise en Scene* with Kevin Reid's "Tony's Song About a Chicken Headed Man".

RM: I think *Mise en Scene* differs from other film nights not so much in content of films but in atmosphere. The packed house spread over all manner of homemade, second and third hand furniture creates a cosy people-scape. Frequent intermissions ensure legs get stretched and all the films get chatted about.

GeV: What are the main hopes and aims you have in putting on events like this?

KV: To give the public access to see short films that they otherwise might not see in Glasgow. Also to give film makers, artists and performers the opportunities to show their work. Combined with satisfying my urge to organise...

RM: *Mise en Scene* attracts an audience far wider than just film creators and their mates. It's an opportunity for a large number of makers and others to meet—though how much productive new relationships are formed isn't (and perhaps shouldn't?) be measured. We are not a dating agency either but I did like the case of the event we did at the old jail when a girl who didn't realise she was going to a gig, met a boy who had no idea he was at an exhibition.

GeV: Are there any sponsors or funding bodies involved?

KV: We don't have any budget or funders. We initially put on the night using our own cash, and after the first night of charging £2 on the door, we used this to cover costs and had a little left for the next night. The idea that putting on these screenings is not at all costly is key (we're not getting paid for putting on the film nights, it's all on a voluntary basis). Anyone could do it... This idea was discussed at last week's workshop as part of *Mise*

en Scene, that Mick Fuzz from *Beyond TV* held (<http://www.beyondtv.org>). *Beyond TV* are a group with links to *Undercurrents* and *Indymedia* based in Manchester. They put on film nights and have been doing a tour of the UK with their *Medicine Show*, which we were privileged to see. Mick's workshop discussed the idea of low cost digital video and how to have access to films through the internet... how to burn CDRoms and create your own film night at extremely little expense. He is planning to come to Glasgow again in July and burn his CDRoms onto a few computers around Glasgow (possibly through *Camcorder Guerrillas* and the *Print Works Social Centre*) and this will give film makers and events organisers free access to new films to burn and potentially use in film nights here in Glasgow. Mick's main goal is "to share techniques and help build a network of media activists who can share ideas for screening nights and the films themselves."

RM: I'm often asked "Are you applying for funding?" Funding for what? If no one came to *Chateau* events then in order to put them on we would need to apply for funding, but then why apply to fund something no one wants?

Funding so that everyone involved got paid would be nice, but if everyone that contributed to an event got paid (including whoever was writing the applications and all the film makers) it would be too expensive to be funded in the current climate. There's seems much more good will towards something if everyone is a volunteer.

If publicly funded we would also be obliged to undertake more rigorous marketing activity and since we are already over subscribed in terms of 'visitor numbers', then that would seem like a waste of money.

Funding for hospitality to give away refreshments seems an attractive prospect. However we have annual visitor numbers approaching five figures without needing to bribe the audience into attending through free refreshments.

GeV: What are your plans for the future of *Mise en*

Scene?

KV: I would like to develop a *Mise en Scene* website (at the moment we have a web page to advertise the nights (www.machinista.org/miseenscene/) and I have an idea to create a rolling submission for people to be able to send their films in and know that they will get shown at some point. This is the same way the Exploding Cinema works [see also

www.variant.org.uk/7texts/Stefan_Szczelkun.html]. I was inspired by them when they appeared at The Arches this year. I'll have to learn how to create a website first I suppose!

Putting on a screening outdoors is still one I'd like to pursue, using renewable energy—a certain friend of mine has a 12V sound system and renewable energy such as batteries, solar and wind power, and could well be up for this idea.

Due to the constraints of working life, it is hard to put on regular nights (e.g. once per month), so the nights have tended to have a 4 month gap in between each event, so if anyone out there has time and energy and wants to get involved, then get in touch! (karenveitch12@yahoo.co.uk)

RM: The future of *Chateau* generally—we'll continue to look out for interesting places and people to do events with, both locally and further afield. Apparently folk in London are still talking about the super-hula hoop-fantastich finale to our event in Islington last year so some other club promoters down south are offering to support a mini *Chateau* tour.

In Glasgow recently, we accepted an informal offer of a year's free lease on a 40 thousand square foot West End property. Hopefully the good intentions will survive the nitty gritty of legal small print.

This week I met separately with representatives from the *Glasgow Gospel Choir* (to plan a rooftop performance) and the *Scottish Linux Users Group* who are helping us set up a computer recycling facility and to provide a free community wireless internet access across a large portion of

central Glasgow. Both groups were really positive, but with hindsight I wish that I met with both of them simultaneously as there would be probably be some interesting undreamt of connections between the groups or individuals within them. Next time.

Thanks to everyone involved in *Mise en Scene* and to all the film makers that have sent their films in to us. Thanks to Mel and Yvonne. Another night coming soon!

Links

Many sacrifices were made at the altar of *machinista* preparations: www.machinista.org/miseenscene/

The Chateau: www.chateaugateau.co.uk

Some Mise En Scene participants...

<http://holeinmypocket.com>

<http://www.ray-mundo.co.uk/>

<http://www.oncewerefarmers.com>

<http://www.artpleasure.com/>

<http://www.beyondtv.org>

and others...

Exploding Cinema: <http://explodingcinema.org>

GAP - Print Works Social Centre: www.glasgow-autonomy.org

Scottish Linux Users Group: www.scotlug.org.uk

Glasgow Media Access Centre: www.g-mac.co.uk

EmergeD: www.emerged.net

Market Gallery: www.marketgallery.org.uk/

Silencio: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/silencionet/>

Indymedia: www.indymedia.org.uk

Guy vEale is a musician, DJ, promoter and writer based in Glasgow—longtime associate of indie Swiss label www.spezialmaterial.ch. A brief biography of Guy vEale can be found under welcome at www.machinista.org