INTERPRETATIONS

Action Research for Interpretation Practice in Contemporary Art

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Overview

*Interpretations* gave four galleries in Scotland the opportunity to affect change in their interpretation practice through action research. Drawing from their own specific circumstances, gallery teams developed innovative ways of working with staff and audiences towards fresh interpretation practice for contemporary art. Through a variety of interventions each project shifts the authorial voice from the expert to the visitor. In using action research the projects promote participation and critical reflection as key values in developing new and existing audiences for contemporary art.

This pre-evaluation report presents each project as an individual case-study and characterises them as iterative, strategic, holistic and responsive, respectively. The case-studies describe the various research questions, methods and outputs and offer a brief analysis of process. Interviews, experiential workshops, questionnaires, document surveys and focus groups were all used as tools in the action research process but investing time in critical reflection emerges as a possible cornerstone of the *Interpretations* project.

*Interpretations* tentatively concludes that whilst action research offers a creative process for affecting individual and organisational change, the challenge of documenting and presenting diverse and complex projects cannot be overestimated: sensitive, sustained support is required for optimum results. The visual literacy of practitioners in the field of gallery education and interpretation could be further championed through the use of image-based methods in the research process. Again, sensitive but rigorous support of practitioners is required to build confidence with existing visual skills towards an action research context. The report concludes by proposing five areas that could structure future evaluation, assessing the success of *Interpretations* and its importance to the fields of gallery education and audience development.