

Sean Edwards

Echo (Group Exhibition Series)

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Author: Edwards, Sean (2014)

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Date: October 2014

Location: Cardiff Contemporary, Cardiff, UK

Attachments: Brochure of the biennial. Images of artworks

URL: <http://www.cardiffcontemporary.co.uk/echo/>

Abstract

Echo was a series of six solo exhibitions I curated across the pages of the South Wales Echo Newspaper for Cardiff Contemporary Biennial. Each Friday, over the six weeks of the festival, a single insertion will appear by artists who have a historic or contemporary relationship to Cardiff. The insertions range from full colour advertisements to small classified ads. The curatorial project aimed to question the ideas of potential sites for public art making Cardiff's local newspaper a space to present newly commissioned art works.

Additional Information: The 'Echo' exhibition series was curated by Sean Edwards and featured artists included Melanie Counsell, James Richards, Laura Reeves, George Henry Longly, Joanne Masding and Richard Bevan.

Description:

By existing outside of a venue the project reached a far greater and varied audience than would have been possible through a static venue. It is hard to quantify the public's engagement with such a project but with a Friday readership readership over the course of the festival of around 70,000 the artworks will have been experienced and engaged with in a wide variety of ways.

Most importantly Echo was established to break down a barrier between

contemporary art and the real world. Appearing without notice in each weeks paper the work would have been seen by a vast array of people, some who might have know that what they were looking at was art whilst for others it maybe caused confusion and questioning. These were all elements considered in conversation with each commissioning artist and all offered their own individual ways to create a work that existed in this place between art and advertising notice. Laura Reeves offered a classified ad in the 'Family Notices' that narrated an all too familiar tale of a working class family of failed artists, whilst Melanie Counsel's finale was a double page spread that offered considerations/ (a critique?) on the Cardiff Bay development and historic public art strategies in Cardiff.

One of the projects aims was to encourage a younger generation of arts practitioners based in Cardiff, who will experience to project, to consider the potential for programmed arts activity to not be solely gallery based. From feedback and discussions with these practitioners it was interesting how they did follow the project and see it as a crucial part of the festivals activity. I said in my initial application that that it seemed to me the core aim for Cardiff Contemporary should be about encouraging activity to extend beyond the festival to use the excitement and positivity of the festival to strengthen the on going arts programme in Cardiff. I think it is clear to see from the success of the festival that this happened, and I hope that Echo will have played a part of that.

"Echo was a welcome contribution to Cardiff contemporary. It activated one of the long established but little used strategies of conceptual art: the artist's 'intervention' into media through the ads section of a newspaper or magazine. This archaeological approach to art history and appropriation of conceptual art's strategies is an important element within Sean Edwards' practice. The project was, predictably, precise and impressive in many ways: its conception, the selection of established and young artists, the choice of the Echo instead of Western Mail, and its execution. It was realistic in its ambitions meaning each artist took it seriously and contributed a piece that was resonant with Cardiff Contemporary, with the context of the paper, and their own practice. At once the most 'visible' project with the greatest circulation, it was also one of the most 'invisible', blurring the boundaries between art and life, news and commerce, the personal, social and political. Echo was an important contribution to making Cardiff Contemporary more than the sum of its parts." - Ben Borthwick, Curator.

