

## **Summarised report on the Leslie Street art Trail 2018**

### **by organiser Wendy Mackey**

The Leslie Street Art Trail, (LSAT) is the brainchild of Blairgowrie artist Wendy Mackey. Last July on a visit to Galashiels she was inspired by seeing the shop and business windows decorated for the occasion of the town's Common Riding. Every window was decorated, it was a very inclusive and colourful affair, and Wendy thought the idea could be bought back to Blairgowrie. She knew that this idea would only work on the back of an existing and successful art festival, namely Perthshire Open Studios (POS) utilising underused windows in Leslie Street, a town centre street, but one which is not really used for retail businesses.

The aims of the first LSAT were to showcase the work of artists participating in Perthshire Open Studios. With the added bonus of creating collaborative partnerships between local businesses and artists.

The showcase windows were enhanced by other art themed events in Leslie Street and the surrounding area

- Blairgowrie Boys exhibition in the library
- Children's art in shop windows
- Two treasure trails to encourage visitors to look in all the windows
- Free taster weaving sessions in Tartan Caledonia, Leslie Street
- Craft exhibition in Wisecraft, Lower Mill Street

### **Cost and Sponsorship**

Sponsorship was received from various local sources.

**Total cost of £646.74 for the whole event**

A breakdown of costs and sponsorship is available on request.

### **Artists**

40 artists participated in the Leslie street art trail, located in 18 windows, nearly 24% of the artists participating in POS. Representing 12 venues, 10% of the total. They exhibited several styles of painting, fused glass, silverware, jewellery, ceramics, basket weaving, up cycled furniture, wood carving, wood turning, knitwear, photography, needlecraft, and weaving. Windows were allocated according to the requirements of the host businesses, and their suitability for the relevant artwork.

Feedback was received from 9 venues i.e 75%

- 3 venues attributed sales directly to the Art trail.

- 5 venues attributed extra visitor numbers directly to the Art trail
- The artists who benefited most from the Art Trail, were solo artists and very small groups of up to 3 artists, who seemed to make the most effort with their displays, and the best use of the opportunity of a free showcase window for 11 days.

Solo artists won all the awards for the best window displays and reported increased sales and visitor numbers. There appears to be a direct correlation between their eye catching and themed window displays, and the success of their showcase windows in increasing sales and visitors.

The artists enjoyed the experience of participating in the Art Trail, and felt that having a showcase window in Blairgowrie for the duration of POS had been a very useful and positive experience which they would like to repeat. Also the more rural locations seem to have benefitted the most.

### **Businesses**

17 businesses and offices participated in Leslie Street Art Trail offering the use of 18 windows.

Since the event Wendy has visited all the businesses and offices with thank you cards. They have been unanimous in their enthusiasm and delight with the event, and they all wish to participate again in 2019. In several cases arrangements have been made between artists and businesses for future events, so collaborative partnerships have already been created.

### **Non POS events**

These extra events enhanced the trail of POS showcase windows, by placing children's art work in windows which were not suitable for artists. Two children's workshops were held to prepare for this.

The Blairgowrie Boys exhibition in the library was extremely well received.

Master weaver Ashleigh Slater reported a good interest in his weaving sessions and demonstrations.

The children's' treasure trail was very popular, the adult's less so. On reflection it was too hard! Next year Wendy plans a single treasure trail for the whole family.

### **Publicity**

This was mostly handled by Clare Damodoran on behalf of Growbiz. There were several articles in the Blairgowrie Advertiser leading up to and after the event. Also an article in the Courier, and the local Hub magazine, which is delivered to 4,500 households within Blairgowrie. Clare sent out press releases and invited the appropriate press for the opening.

The STV news coverage was directly attributable to Clare, and was wonderful publicity for POS, Leslie Street and Blairgowrie.

A Facebook page was set up and run by Cornelia Weinmann for the duration of LSAT. It has now been hibernated until next year. There will be a follow up article in the pre-Christmas Hub magazine.

## **Conclusions**

As can be seen in this report, the event has been overwhelming and unanimously well received by the business owners, sponsors, supporters and the local community. Some issues raised by participating artists have already been addressed for the 2019 event.

## **2019 event**

A short summary of next year's event

- While the 2018 event is still fresh in everyone's memory, Wendy has visited 2 businesses on the north side of the Wellmeadow, who have agreed to take part next year. 2 other windows have been organised in the Wellmeadow, whose availability will depend on their tenants at the time. Another Wellmeadow business is keen to take part, but may not be suitable for artwork.
- 2 other businesses have asked to take part next year.
- 3 more windows have been offered in the Blairgowrie and Rattray Development Trust offices. The Development Officer is very enthusiastic about the event, and has offered to be involved in future applications for funding.
- As the 2018 event was so well received by the people of Blairgowrie, Wendy plans to enhance the POS showcase trail with more non POS events involving the local community, High School students, children, art workshops and competitions. Using premises which have been made available to her, but which are not suitable for artists work. The branding and promotion will reflect the different aspects of the Art Trail.
- Wendy plans to invite all the members of the Orange route to participate next year, as it is obvious from the feedback received, that those who benefited the most were the more rural and solo artists.
- Following the success of 2018, the treasure trail will be an intergenerational duck hunt!
- Blairgowrie High School art department plan to decorate the Leslie Street area using recycled materials.

In short - More businesses, more POS artists, more community involvement and art,  
and more ducks!

Wendy Mackey 15<sup>th</sup> October 2018