

# **CETLD Project Evaluation Report**

**Project co-ordinators: Rebecca Arnold, Carly Eck, Frank Gray, Elaine Sheppard**

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**Project name: Screen Search Fashion**

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**Intended completion date: 31/08/09**

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**Actual completion date: 31/08/09**

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## **Introduction: Background and context to project**

Screen Search Fashion was a collaborative project between the RCA and the Screen Archive South East (SASE) at University of Brighton. It focused upon the creation of enhanced database entries, a search facility and a connected thematic resource comprising learning routes focussed on 1920s and 1930s fashion, as an addition to the archive's existing general database. The project united the SASE archivists' skills in cataloguing, organisation and online data presentation with the RCA fashion historians' knowledge of 1920s and 1930s dress, and its analysis and use within teaching and learning.

The project has created an online teaching and learning resource that will be accessible to all, and which enables a fascinating resource, which has hitherto been underused for fashion research, to be opened up to a wider audience. As stated in our Interim report, the vast potential of non-fiction film as a resource for students interested in fashion and dress is highlighted by the project's outputs, and because of the resource is online, it has the potential to contribute to dress historians' developing interest in everyday fashions.

## **Methodologies: How the project was conducted**

### **Project structure**

We agreed the project's entire schedule at our first meeting – with dates decided for meetings, workshops, lectures and study day at the start. Other important deadlines – relating to technical needs and writing schedules were then worked out in relation to our meetings and other 'stage posts' within the project. This gave the whole team a very clear sense of the project's development, and although a couple of deadlines were shifted slightly to accommodate the increased time that was needed, for example, to view all the films, in general all deadlines were met. This reflected the high level of commitment from all team members, and the cooperative nature of the way the project was conducted.

The project's conduct has followed a distinct pattern – of research, discussion, reflection and application. Each stage was interspersed with debate and feedback within the team, and with students and related professionals. At first it involved intensive research into SASE's interwar films, then consideration of their relationship

to teaching and learning practice. It moved into a more technical and design-based phase as the resource began to take shape. We then shifted towards writing and uploading material, and working on the other project outputs.

### **Project management**

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From the start the project was conducted in a collaborative manner. We discussed all issues as a team at monthly meetings and through regular email contact. This was a very productive process, and we quickly established a good working relationship that enabled decisions to be made collectively. The monthly meetings provided an invaluable platform to map out each stage of the project, consider our progress, and adjust our schedule and methods as necessary.

Rebecca Arnold has provided overall management of the project, overseeing its progress, its financial management, ensuring that deadlines have been met and writing the interim and evaluation reports.

The project has progressed smoothly, despite a change in personnel midway through, when Hannah Kauffman left and Carly Eck took over as Research Assistant. Any such changes were agreed with CETLD.

### **Methodology for the Workshops:**

The four workshops –two at University of Brighton and two at the Royal College of Art acted as important stage posts, and enabled us to pause to reflect on our progress and methods. We discussed all findings together and then considered how to apply our findings within our work. As described in our original application the workshops acted as 1. Conceptual – aiding the way we shaped the project at the start; 2 &3 Design – enabling us to adjust and develop the resource’s design in line with feedback and finally, 4. Evaluative – providing us with the opportunity to reflect upon the resource in discussion with specialist curator/tutors and students.

#### **Workshop 1: 4<sup>th</sup> December 2008**

Questions asked:
1 What interested you about the films?
2 What did you think about the information in the entry?

This was at a very early stage in the project. The format was simple, as we mainly wanted to know how students would respond to the films, and to a basic description of their content in terms of dress. We screened one film in its entirety and talked about question one, and then asked the students to read a description of it before discussing question two. We wanted general information to help to shape the way we approached the resource’s design and content and the kind of themes we should include.

### Workshops 2 & 3: 5<sup>th</sup> & 12<sup>th</sup> March 2009

Questions asked:
Initial response What things did you look at? What did you think of them?
Use How might you use it in your studies? What context do you need to make use of the entries? What additional information would you like to see accompanying each entry?
Quality issues What do you think of the quality of the film? To what extent does quality matter?
Structure To what extent were the themes useful to you?
Overall What makes film different from other sources of visual information? To what extent is it valuable to the study of fashion history? To what extent is the resource unique?

These workshops were more detailed, as we already had some content completed and were working on the design of the resource. We hoped to gather information on the ways a student might use the resource, on their opinions about the quality of the film footage and stills, on the resource's proposed structure and then general comments about using non-fiction film as a resource for studying fashion and dress.

Above are the points we asked participants to respond to after they had looked at the resource. At this stage, we had set out the framework for the online resource and completed one of the themes (1930s Fashion).

The format of these workshops was the same – we asked students to look around the resource with no introduction from us, to try to get their unbiased reactions and to replicate a more usual environment where they might encounter the website without any external information about its content or nature. The University of Brighton students had attended a talk about the project, so had more knowledge of our aims, but the RCA students knew nothing about the project. We felt this method had the potential to provide comparative material and to highlight whether any further general information was needed for the resource to be comprehensible to its users.

Once students had looked at the resource, we had a discussion about its content, ease of use, and usefulness, before asking students to complete the response sheet. The discussion was based around prompts – open questions that were intended to gain the information we needed at this stage in the project.

### Workshop 4: 28<sup>th</sup> May 2009

For this workshop we used the same questions as for workshops 2 & 3. This was because we wanted to revisit these issues at this later stage, when more of the

themes were in place, and the final design of the resource had been created. Curators who had not seen the resource before took part, as well as the two students who had participated in workshop 3 at the RCA. This meant the students could reflect on the resource's development, while the curators could react to its more finished state and give a professional opinion, without prior knowledge of the project.

### **Other Activities:**

The lecture-seminars Rebecca Arnold and Hannah Kauffman gave to the BA Fashion final year students, and as part of the CETLD research seminar series came mid-way through the project. Again, these became part of the project's working process and gave the whole team space to reflect on progress to date. They also provided another arena for feedback and discussion, which could then be considered during subsequent monthly meetings.

The project's final 'public' element was the study day on 21<sup>st</sup> May at the V&A Museum. The range of speakers enabled comparisons to be drawn in relation to the nature of different film collections and the differing ways they can be used within teaching and learning. Further discussions with the diverse audience integrated the team's ideas with a wider community of tutors, curators and students.

## **Outcomes & Findings**

### **Use of online resources**

The main lessons learnt over the course of the project related to the ways that practice students engage with websites and images as learning tools, and how this could effectively be balanced with tutors' potential teaching requirements when using such a resource. We needed to structure the resource in line with our findings from the workshops, and feedback at lectures and the study day. For example, in the first workshop, practice and history of design students said they 'respond to seeing something first,' while after one of our lectures, Malcolm McInnes, Academic Programme Leader for BA (Hons) Fashion at University of Brighton commented on the abstract way design projects might employ the resource – starting from the way 1930s' drapery moved on the body, for example. This prompted us to ensure that the clips included could be replayed to study details and movement, and in some cases were looped to emphasise the fabric's fluidity.

As can be seen in the data from the response sheets given below, there was both difference and parity within the students' responses to the resource – as seen in the examples from workshops 2 & 3 below. While the practice students from UoB focus more on the films themselves, the RCA History of Design students showed interest in the resource's 'trustworthiness' and the nature of the film analysis included. However, for both groups, ease of use and page set out were significant issues.

	<b>Response Sheets for Workshops 2 &amp; 3</b>
<b>Things I liked best:</b>	<p><b>UoB1:</b> Very easy to navigate. I liked the depth of detail about the era and the films. You could read into the subject in as much detail as you would like to.</p> <p><b>UoB2:</b> The interesting colours on some of the films. Close ups. Flowers, orchids [this refers to women's corsages in one of the films].</p> <p><b>UoB3:</b> The more unusual videos. Information of the videos set the context of the pieces.</p> <p><b>RCA1:</b> Good quality website, looks trustworthy. Succinct, informative textual information. Easy to navigate around the site. Films very useful for contextual understanding, wider knowledge and seeing the clothing in use/in motion. Having stills handy when analyzing clothes.</p> <p><b>RCA2:</b> Actual footage – seeing movement, seeing clothes in use. Clear format. Detailed info about footage – makes it easier to reference.</p>
<b>Things I would change:</b>	<p><b>UoB1:</b> Subsection – mens suits / ladies dresses through the times.</p> <p><b>UoB2:</b> Subdivide the site. Most unusual footage. Find the most relevant footage to broad range of people.</p> <p><b>UoB3:</b> Perhaps wouldn't have the video links take you away into the main archive.</p> <p><b>RCA1:</b> Perhaps differentiate the main headings from subheadings in some way – bolder different colour for example. Initially clicked on the image which took us to a different page than clicking on the subheading did.</p> <p><b>RCA2:</b> More contextual information on how high fashion was approached by ordinary people. Explain class limitations, i.e. only upper middle classes able to afford video cameras.</p>
<b>Words I would use to describe the resource:</b>	<p><b>UoB1:</b> Interesting, in depth, specialist yet free for all.</p> <p><b>UoB2:</b> Insightful, interesting.</p> <p><b>UoB3:</b> Helpful, constructive, interesting.</p> <p><b>RCA1:</b> Informative, trustworthy source, useful.</p> <p><b>RCA2:</b> Academic, clear. Footage = exciting, inspirational, moving.</p>
	<p><b>KEY:</b> UoB = University of Brighton BA Fashion Design student RCA = RCA/V&amp;A MA History of Design student</p>

The discussions in each workshop raised similar issues. In the first workshop students were concerned about the quality of the films shown. We therefore needed to filter our choices of which material to include, in terms of how easy it was to see the clothes in short clips or stills, rather than just thinking about how interesting the dress examples were.

Other issues concerned the expectations of the different student groups – in workshop one the dress history students felt the descriptive information was too ‘obvious’, whereas the design students found this element more useful, as did the design history students. Also, the design history students were concerned about technical issues, such as how to reference a film in an essay. They wanted to know more about amateur filmmaking in the period covered too. While these issues are certainly pertinent, they went beyond the remit of our project, and therefore suggest future areas that could be explored.

### **The resource**

We learnt to write for online media, to enhance teaching and learning, and developed themes that would relate to common issues within the study of dress. We balanced more factual and descriptive material in the database, with contextual and comparative material that would make it accessible to students with different levels of knowledge and learning ability. We also learnt a considerable amount about the technical possibilities and limitations involved in creating such a resource.

### **ICT in teaching and learning:**

The project has provided lessons on the ways a new platform can be created to enable a specialist subject, in our case dress and fashion, to be explored via an online resource. The team has learnt how to use technology to explore ways to enable students to access SASE’s collections. We have learnt, for example, ways to allow students to pause and replay the clips to examine them in greater detail and how to construct an ICT resource that balances its content and design with technical and design limitations. We have also learnt to integrate reference to other resources, including an extensive bibliography, to encourage students to see ICT resources as an element within their learning experience, to be balanced with more conventional research using books and journals. We have also drawn upon comments from workshops to include a wide range of links to other online databases and websites to use as comparisons to the material included on the project’s resource. This encourages students to use a variety of ICT sources and thus to contrast the evidence provided by different museum and archive collections.

**Teaching and Learning Enhancements:** The workshops we held provided a forum in which we began to understand the ways the resource needed to be structured and designed to engage both tutors and students in a productive teaching and learning process. From the first workshop, practice students emphasised that imagery was their route into learning. We therefore placed more focus on the range of stills we would include to teach them ‘visually’ as well as through the text and links we included.

This was a very valuable lesson for the project team, and opened up the way we thought about our work, and the students’ perception of teaching tools. Thus, the thematic resource provides both a visual and textual essay on each specific area of

dress as seen in the archive's film holdings. This allows students to gain a strong sense of developments in dress, different types of clothing, and its relationship to other sources from the imagery included. They can then progress to a deeper understanding by reading the text and clicking the links to discover other kinds of sources (e.g. surviving dress) held in other collections. This format encourages a fluid learning experience, enabling students to pause on a particular clip and replay it as many times as they wish. They can jump between different clips, stills and links, without losing the core meaning of each theme.

We learnt from discussions with students in the workshops, and after a lecture to BA Fashion students at University of Brighton, that they frequently began both written essays and practical projects by researching images, and then moved on to other types of evidence. However, they sometimes found it difficult to know firstly, how to describe the dress they found, and secondly, where else to learn about their findings. The structure of the project's resource therefore also mirrors the students' own research and learning process, taking them smoothly from clip or still, to description, and contrasting film imagery with pictures of surviving dress. Links to a wide variety of archival and museum collections enhances the students' learning experience further.

### **Research outcomes:**

These outcomes have been varied, reflecting the different types of research we have undertaken over the course of the year. Firstly, we have learnt from the four workshops held at the University of Brighton and at the RCA. This process has itself become a research outcome – enabling the team to understand how best to structure workshops and the role that this research can play in shaping other aspects of a project. The workshops' content and feedback forms another outcome – and has provided rich research on the ways students, curators and tutors use online resources and, in turn, how this impacts teaching and learning. This research has shown, for example, how to structure a web page to guide students through images and content via sub-headings and captions; how to approach balancing the resource's content so that it is appropriate to students with differing knowledge levels, and the need to provide templates of how to describe dress seen in non-fiction film, for students who have not encountered this type of material before.

Hannah Kauffman and Carly Eck, the two Research Assistants who have worked on the resource, have undertaken extensive research, on SASE's films; dress of the interwar period, and on the range of additional resources available on this area. This led to research on how to examine dress in film, and how non-fiction film differed from fiction film in relation to the ways dress is shown, and how it can be interpreted. This has also involved looking at a diverse range of sources, including magazines, newspaper archives, surviving dress in national and local museums and online databases. The material gathered has been central to the resource's content, and has been examined during the team's lectures and study day talks, as well as in the articles produced as part of the project.

Finally, Elaine Sheppard has undertaken research on how to create and structure an online resource, and how this new site can be interlinked with SASE's existing database. This research has combined understanding of technical and design issues,

with research from the rest of the team on pedagogy and dress history, to shape the resource that has been created.

## Outputs

Lecture	2
Workshop	4
Online	1
Other activity (please state)	Study Day
Outputs (please state)	2 Articles

We have met all our aims, as stated in our proposal:

i) the project's online resource, and connected SASE database entries have enhanced the accessibility and effectiveness and extended the content of the previous SASE Screen Search site as a research and learning resource benefiting practice-based students, in particular those interested in clothing.

ii) through our activities, and the dissemination of information about these events and the resource itself, we have increased awareness and understanding of how screen archive sources can be used within art and design education to stimulate collections-based learning for practice students.

iii) We have developed a template that could be used to enhance access to other aspects of the SASE collection; and which has the potential to be adopted by other archives seeking to improve their accessibility and effectiveness in relation to design education.

iv) We have enabled participants from partner institutions to collaborate in developing and sharing the skills necessary fully to exploit archival collections within design teaching and learning.

iv) We have developed skills and sustainable links between RCA, V&A, SASE and University of Brighton through the resource's development, workshops and events. (see future benefits below).

v) We have disseminated information about the enhanced online resource through established academic, press and online publicity avenues used by SASE to promote its suite of existing online resources. Carly Eck has submitted a paper on the resource and the project's findings to *Costume*, a subject-specialist journal that is widely read by professionals and students. Rebecca Arnold has also proposed an article on the resource to *BBC Who Do You Think You Are?* Magazine, which has a large circulation and will therefore disseminate information on the project and its outputs far more widely.

The project's outcomes have successfully addressed CETLD's aims and objectives, as set out in our proposal:



- i) Learning spaces: This project examined the ways SASE's collection can be used as an online research and learning resource to benefit design in higher education.
- ii) Use and application of collections: through its exploration of ways to design and implement more accessible and design-orientated metadata, vocabulary and contextualised descriptions for SASE's online resource and increase the online resource's content with films that specifically relate to clothing, the project directly addressed SASE's use and application within design education.
- iii) Pedagogic research: the project makes the SASE collection more accessible to practice-based and design history students and considered the benefits of this enhanced access to their learning experience'

### **Project Activities**

We have held four workshops (see above), at which we showed practice and History of Design students the resource as it was developed. Chris Mitchell Learning & Teaching Coordinator at the Royal College of Art facilitated the workshops, with team members also participating. They provided an invaluable opportunity to gain feedback on the progress of the resource, and to consider how best to design its content to address student needs.

As described above, the workshops were planned at key moments in the project's progress, so that we could gain maximum benefit from the students' ideas. The workshops were poorly attended – but those who did attend, paid great attention to the work we had done to date, and made a lot of thoughtful comments. These workshops also began the process of publicizing the resource, with students saying that they would use it once it was completed.

Rebecca Arnold and Hannah Kauffman gave a talk to the BA Fashion final year students. This was attended by fifteen students and their tutor and was very well received. We gained a lot of insight into the ways the students might use the resource, and how it could be taken as a starting point for design projects (as described above). The final workshop included two curators from the Fashion department at the V&A Museum (one of whom is also a tutor at Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design).

Arnold and Kauffman also gave a lecture in the CETLD seminar series. This was very well attended. Thirty people came to the talk, including a wide range of University of Brighton staff and students. All team members took part in the discussion that took place after the talk. The feedback we received was very encouraging and emphasized the pedagogic values of the resource and the aspects of dress and fashion that SASE's material revealed that were difficult, or impossible, to understand from other types of evidence. This includes being able to see how clothes were actually worn, how they moved on the body and the range of clothing worn by different classes and age groups.

Our largest event was a study day held in the Lecture Theatre at the V&A Museum (See programme in appendix I). All team members spoke, as did archivists from the BFI and Imperial War Museum, and two curator-lecturers who spoke about their

own work using film archives. This enabled us to publicise the resource, contextualise it in relation to other collections, and also demonstrated ways that students might use non-fiction film as a source in their own work.

The study day was attended by approximately seventy people, including students from the Royal College of Art, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design, and London College of Fashion. Curators, tutors, and conservators also attended and the discussion sessions in the afternoon included a good cross section of this audience. Students were interested in how they could access the resource, as well as how to learn more about film archives in general. Tutors and other professionals were equally keen to discover more about film archives.

### **The Project's Benefits to those involved**

Teachers	c.40
Students	c. 70
Others taking part (please state)	c. 15 curators

Teachers have been involved in our final workshops, in the audiences and discussion at the two lectures given and at the study day. A wider number have also received information about the project and study day through use of multiple email groups for dissemination of project material (see below). They have benefited from the information given about the content and scope SASE's collections during these events. They have learnt how the resource, and therefore also the collections can be used within their own teaching and learning. This knowledge sharing and dissemination has been extended through the fruitful discussions that took place during these events. These widened out consideration of how non-fiction film can be integrated into teaching projects to students at different levels of study and within both practice-based and historical and cultural studies projects. At the study day there was also considerable discussion of how to access a wide range of film archives' collections, what can be found in these collections and how tutors and students can use this in their teaching and learning.

Students benefited from involvement in the workshops – they learnt in detail about the resource and how they could use it, and SASE's collections in their own studies, and they also learnt about how a project like ours develops. They were also able to see how their comments helped to shape the final resource, as some students attended more than one event. They were all very enthusiastic about the project, and said they would use it, and that they had learnt how to use non-fiction film by taking part.

Curators attended the lectures, and study day and the final workshop. They were very interested in the resource and its application of collections within a teaching and learning context. One curator, who also teaches in HEIs, said that it is 'a wonderful resource - the immediacy of non-fiction film is extraordinary' – a

comment that reflected the reaction of students and tutors, who felt that it opened up a whole new type of material to them. Another curator felt that 'this resource is very accessible' for students from disadvantaged adults taking part in FE initiatives at the V&A Museum, and said she would recommend it to the museum's Learning and Interpretation department.

### **Projected future benefits**

This project has created an online resource that is available to everyone who has access to the Internet. It is therefore impossible to quantify the number of people that it will benefit. All those who have taken part in the project's events have said that they will use the resource within their own teaching and learning (see statistics above), and many more have shown interest in the resource by responding to the email about our study day. We are convinced that this underused form of evidence for dress is made far more accessible through the resource we have created. Rebecca Arnold will be using it within her teaching at BA and MA level at the Courtauld Institute of Art, and tutors at the RCA, Central Saint Martins College of Art and Design and University of Brighton have also stated that they will use it within their future teaching.

The project offers a template of how collections can be made more accessible through collaborative work between archivists and subject specialists. The CD of the project resource that will be deposited at the National Art Library at the V&A Museum will provide off-line access to the museum's users.

### **Dissemination**

Several institutions, including the V&A, Museum of London, Fashion in Film Festival, Horsham Museum and Worthing Museum have said that they will provide links to the resource on their own websites, and this will enable an even wider, and potentially international audience to benefit from our work.

The articles submitted to *Costume* and proposed to *BBC Who Do You Think You Are?* Magazine will provide contextualization of the resource, the project and the ways collections can be used by students and tutors to the wider academy community and beyond.

As stated above, information about the project and events connected with it have been disseminated both locally within the CETLD partnership institutions, and more widely. The workshops and lectures provided information to students, tutors and curators. This was extended when we publicized the study day – information about which was sent to HEIs nationally, and to museums. The programme (see appendix) was also sent to a wide range of email groups, including ones specializing in women's history, consumption studies and dress and textiles groups. It was also linked to the international Fashion in Film Festival site, and placed on its Facebook page.

The study day provided an important forum for disseminating information, as its audience included a wide range of students, tutors, and curators – many of whom are opinion-formers in the field, and it has generated string word-of-mouth promotion of the project's work.

The articles, as described above, will provide continued dissemination about the project and the resource. This is particularly true of the article submitted to *Costume*, since HEI libraries internationally subscribe to this journal and therefore constitutes to permanent record of the work we have carried out.

## **Conclusion**

As stated in our original proposal the project specifically addresses CETLD's thematic interest in 'application and transferability to a wider audience.' The resource that we have developed enhances the SASE collection's online accessibility and availability, with particular emphasis on relevance and usefulness to design students and tutors interested in clothing. We have used the feedback we received during workshops and at other events to shape the content, design and technical capabilities of the resource to ensure that it is easy to use and appropriate to students with various skills levels.

The project has established a strong 'collaboration between two partner institutions,' through a close partnership between fashion and design historians at the RCA, and screen archivists from SASE at University of Brighton. Team members have worked closely together throughout the project to ensure that all aspects of the resource, as well as the events staged, were discussed and shaped collaboratively.

In general, the project's working process has been successful. Its careful organisation from the initial proposal has ensured that our working methods have been appropriate. We have been responsive to each other, and to students and others who have taken part in workshops, seminars and the study day. Our close collaboration has produced effective results and provided a sound template for further work within the team, and for other archives looking to work with tutors and students on teaching and learning projects.

Finally, we have learnt the significant benefits to be reaped from collaborations between archivists and subject specialists. Our combined knowledge and experience has enabled us to share ideas and approaches that have enhanced the working practices of all involved. The uniqueness of our experience was emphasized by discussions generated during the study day. Archivists at other collections were impressed by the level of collaboration and the results it had produced, which they were keen to see replicated in their own collections. Students were keen to use the resource and appreciated the potential applications it had within their own learning experiences.

## **CETLD Project support**

Thinking about the project, how did CETLD:

### **a. manage your application?**

- ☐ very well
- ☒ well
- ☐ neither well nor badly
- ☐ badly
- ☐ very badly

### **b. support you during the process?**

- ☐ very well
- ☒ well
- ☐ neither well nor badly
- ☐ badly
- ☐ very badly

**Are there any other comments you would like to make? Please comment on how CETLD could improve its support.**

We would particularly like to commend Anne Asha for the encouragement and support she gave the project team throughout the duration of our project.

I confirm that, as far as I know, the information in this evaluation summary is true and correct, and that I have complied with the conditions attached to the grant.

**Project organiser signature**

Rebecca Arnold.

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**Name (Use CAPITAL LETTERS)**

Rebecca Arnold.

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**Second project organiser signature (if applicable)**

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**Name (Use CAPITAL LETTERS)**

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**Third project organiser signature (if applicable)**

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**Name (Use CAPITAL LETTERS)**

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	<i>Day</i>	<i>/</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>/</i>	<i>Year</i>
Date	26	/	08	/	2009

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**Received by CETLD office:**

**Name (Use CAPITAL LETTERS)**

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	<i>Day</i>	<i>/</i>	<i>Month</i>	<i>/</i>	<i>Year</i>
Date		/		/	

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NB: This evaluation summary has been adapted from the activity report form provided by the Arts Council to evaluate its recipients of its grants. The original can be found at [http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/gfta2006\\_offered.php](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/gfta2006_offered.php) (accessed 20/08/07)