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11 November 2009

Modern rubbish is art

Photo opportunity: 2pm on Monday, November 16th. at Friarton Recycling Centre, Perth. Fraser MacDonald will be showing off the Garbologists' 'office' and explaining more about how refuse collectors are artists in their own right.

'Modern art is a just a load of rubbish' - a commonly heard complaint amongst traditionalists, but a Perth-based artist is setting out to prove that two of the words in that sentence have been mixed up.

The unlikely setting of the Friarton Recycling Centre will play host to Fraser MacDonald's unique project that investigates the importance of work done by the employees of The Environment Service of Perth & Kinross Council.

Fraser (23) is a Fine Art graduate of Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, part of the University of Dundee, as well as a former street sweeper in the Fair City. He is undertaking the project as one of the artists involved in the 'Nine Trades of Dundee' project that seeks to take art directly to the workplace and challenge preconceptions about who is an artist.

Each project is run by an artist who is either working in a job that helps fund their artwork, or who has done in the past.

Fraser's idea for the project is to create an art movement run as a mock trade union called 'The Garbologists'. Garbology is a term that refers to the study of refuse, and anyone who works for The Environment Service and who wants to be involved can become a Garbologist.

Fraser has built a shed at Friarton Recycling Centre, which will serve as headquarters of the movement.

Refuse collectors may not be the first people that you think of as artists, but Fraser explained that he wants turn people's preconceptions on their head and demonstrate that art isn't just an elitist activity enjoyed in art galleries.

'The point is that everyone who wants to be, can be an artist,' he said. 'I've worked at the Centre on and off for four years and was working there last summer after I graduated when Nine Trades started up. I thought my experiences there would make for an interesting study that fitted with the theme of the project.'

'I got on really well with the guys when I worked there, so hopefully they'll get behind what I'm doing and get involved with the project, which should be a lot of fun. It's all about the different crews and workers and the different happenings that occur on the lorries and on the site. I will be working with the other employees to record stories, take photographs and do a lot of filming.'

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'I want to investigate the importance of the job, both in terms of keeping the streets clean and recycling. All contributions from workers are welcome, as they are the artists in this movement. We'll also engaging with public to show them what's going on.'

'In the spirit of the project I want everything to be as green as possible so I'll be travelling to Friarton on a bike that's been rescued from garbage. I'll be looking out for interesting items that the public have thrown away, and the furniture in the shed/office will be rescued from the skips as well.'

'I hope to produce a paper, which will feature a 'Find of the fortnight' section, but really it's not so much about the rubbish as the jobs these guys are doing because it is such an important job and often one that is overlooked.'

'I know from my own experiences how much hard work and humour is involved in the job that's why I'm setting up art movement as way of showing this. Hopefully, this will make people think twice about what they might see as a dull, everyday job.'

'The final outcome of the project will be the film I make, as well as a publication bringing the relevant documentation and photographs together. Hopefully, afterwards we'll leave the shed onsite and open to the public to visit.'

Nine Trades is a project initiated by the Exhibitions Department at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design. It was inspired by the 'The Nine Incorporated Trades of Dundee', an organisation that has been operating since the 1800's. Originally concerned with commerce and standards of the city it now functions as a charity and is involved in the preservation of heritage.

'Nine Trades of Dundee' aims to increase arts access and encourage more participation for non-arts audiences by bringing art activity and creativity to the heart of the workplace.

Notes to editors:

Nine Trades of Dundee is a project devised by Exhibitions at Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design, University of Dundee, and funded by The National Lottery through the Scottish Arts Council's Inspire Fund.

The outputs of the 'Nine Trades of Dundee' will include nine core collaborative commissions; a 'Nine Trades Final Gathering' event bringing together the artists, participants and wider audience; two 'open door' tours to see the work in situ; nine 'Nine Trades Apprenticeships' for Duncan of Jordanstone students; one 'Nine Trades' workshop for a Dundee school; an Edinburgh International Festival musical performance co-presented with The Space of 'Experimentum Mundi', an Italian orchestra of artisans; and a linked Creative Learning Resource to accompany the 'Nine Incorporated Trades of Dundee' display at McManus Galleries.

The project will commission nine artists with second non-art trades to lead collaborative art projects with workers from that particular trade, and commissions will be developed to fit the individual artists practice and the working environment and the artist will receive curatorial and peer support as part of the larger 'Nine Trades of Dundee' project.

More information is available by visiting www.ninetrades.com.

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