

Media Release

A Perfect Father Day or What use is a father?

- Anthony Schrag, explores the roles and expectations of the father figure in the latest Deveron Arts *The Town is the Venue* Residency.
- Programme of events and interventions culminates in “A Perfect Father Day” when fun public activities will combine with a debate on the role of fathers in the 21st century.
- Film, *What use is a father?* records contemporary public attitudes to fatherhood.

The latest artist in residence at Deveron Arts, Anthony Schrag, has launched a series of events and interventions exploring the roles and expectations of the father figure that will culminate in ***A Perfect Father Day***, on 19 June 2011.

“Fathers are not discussed within our society as often as mothers,” says Schrag, *“though recent publications by the UN have confirmed that the role of the father is significant in both a family's success and a child's development.”*



“Through the programme of events I hope to get people to think more about how we view fathers nowadays, and to encourage fathers to think about how they view themselves and their place within society.”

Commuters returning to Huntly station after work have already encountered one of Schrag's interventions as they were met by friends and family holding a variety of “welcome home” signs. Meanwhile, in a subvention of the male **role** model notion, surrogate father Schrag held a “hill rolling” event with the town's younger residents

In the coming weeks the artist will lead a number of other events and interventions. A *Make Beer, Drink Beer* club has been set up for fathers. Gathering weekly to make the beer fathers can discuss issues of family and fatherhood in an informal setting. The beer made by the club will be drunk on Father's Day at the *Perfect Father* event. The artist is also developing a Fathers Group at the Huntly family centre offering a series of workshops devised to support the local community, and is creating opportunities to help increase bonding between fathers and children such as *A Sup(p)er Shave*, (when fathers will be able to pass on shaving skills to their sons), and "Blind Fishing".

Recognising that not all families have a father Schrag has also established a "Rent-A-Dad" scheme where the artist helps out with a family event or activity. The project will be documented in a series of photographs to provide a rich overview of the many roles that a father plays in family life.

"This project has a particular resonance in the North East of Scotland where many fathers work offshore or internationally," says Schrag.



Throughout his *The Town is the Venue* Residency Schrag is also recording interviews with women and children asking them to answer the question "What use is a father?". The resulting film will be shown as part of *A Perfect Father Day*. The programme for the Father's Day event will certainly include a range of fun family activities such as wheelbarrow races and a "Parade to the Pub", along with a serious discussion on perceptions of fatherhood with contributions from organisations and individuals including special guest Matt O'Connor, Founder of *Fathers for Justice*.

A Perfect Father Day? Is the latest in the on-going series of Deveron Arts residencies that have set a blueprint for socially engaged Public Art practice. Each project sees an artist explore an issue that has both local and international resonances.

"Public Art is not simply about creating physical work," says Director of Deveron Arts, Claudia Zeiske. *"The Town is the Venue* residencies see artists living and working in Huntly leading projects that speak to the concerns of the local community and setting them within an international context. The projects bring people together in new ways and help to create a greater sense of community here in the town."

“The debates, which form a vital part of all our residencies, see artist and artworks act as a catalyst for public discussion of issues, offering a platform for the community to give voice to their concerns and hopes,” she adds.

On a recent visit to Huntly the Director of Creative Scotland, Andrew Dixon endorsed the work of Deveron Arts, describing it as *"Deveron Arts and Huntly could teach the rest of Scotland how to involve people in art. Deveron Arts' approach is unique and so many of its projects have been innovative. Creative Scotland will be looking to find ways to share the energy and experience of Huntly with other places not just in Scotland but all over the world. Deveron Arts has been hugely successful in engaging with local people and building high levels of participation."*

A Perfect Father Day Event: 19 June 2011

From 12 pm: Father Day Celebrations
Deveron Beach, near Huntly Castle

5.30 pm: What Use is a Father?
Discussion about the changing role of Fatherhood
Huntly Football Club with:

Dr Natasha Mauthner, University of Aberdeen
David Harding, Artist and Educator
Rev Neil McGregor
Sandy Mack, Youth Worker
And other fathers from all walks of life

For full details of **A Perfect Father Day** and the ongoing series of events led by Anthony Schrag visit www.deveron-arts.com.

The project has been made possible with support from Aberdeenshire Council, Creative Scotland, Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Leader EU funds.

Ends

Notes for Editors

- **Deveron Arts**, the acclaimed Huntly based organization, has led the way in taking art out of the gallery with the town itself is becoming the venue for a wide range of visual and performing arts events. Deveron Arts invites artists from all over the world to live and work in the town to meet with local people and exchange ideas on issues of both local and global concern. In the last year resident

artists have come from as far afield as South Africa, China, Mozambique and Congo Brazzaville as well as the UK. **For further information visit www.deveron-arts.com**

- Scottish-based international artist **Anthony Schrag** has always been interested in the phenomenological, and his practice focuses the physical sensations of the body at the core, as opposed to intellectual or emotional considerations. The work often takes the form of solo performances, interactive installations, publications, interventions, sculptures as well as a variety of other strategies to explore these notions. Anthony looks to subvert social, political or emotional situations by altering physical expectations with the hope that an alternate reading of a corporeal experience will give birth to new meanings or new knowledge or shifts in perception. When working this way, he aims to return the body to the locus of the art experience, rather than any abstracted notions that rely so heavily on training, culture, class and education. The impulse for this type of work comes from an interest in theories related to socially engaged practices and inviting a wide spectrum of the public into a shared, cultural debate. Schrag first came to Huntly in Spring 2010 on an RSA scholarship working with the town's youngsters as part of on David Sherry's "Risk Assessed" event.