

ButCH

January 2025

MAKING MISCHIEF



Evaluation

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Prepared for

**London College of
Fashion**

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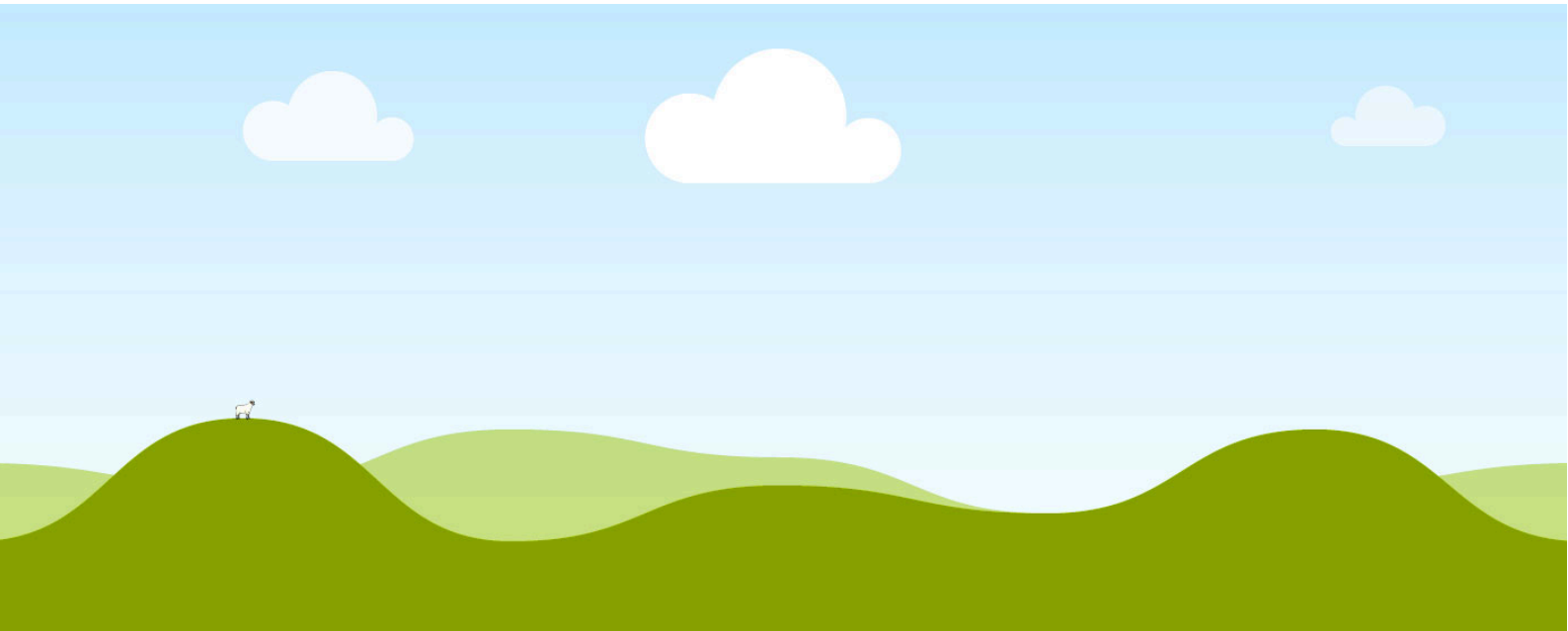
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report presents an evaluation of Making Mischief: Seasonal customs and the living heritage of folk costume in Britain.

In 2022, the Making Mischief project was awarded £249,007 by the Dynamic Collections stream of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF). Making Mischief was a collaborative project between the Centre for Fashion Curation (CfFC) at London College of Fashion (LCF, part of University of the Arts London), the Museum of British Folklore (MoBF), and Compton Verney, Warwickshire. Its principal aim was to bring folk customs to a wide audience using costume and display, and in doing so, demonstrate the liveliness, persistence and evolution, as well as history, of folk culture in Britain. In order to achieve this, the project sought to engage and co-create with communities – those involved in diverse folk traditions, and those who are not.

The project's major outputs comprised significant exhibitions held at Compton Verney (February-June 2023) and London College of Fashion (April-June 2024). A series of events, talks, collaborations, workshops and outreach actions were organised around each exhibition, the latter resulting in loans and accessions.

ButCH was appointed as the evaluation consultant for the project. We undertook evaluation activities and surveys at the Making Mischief and Making More Mischief exhibitions and events, engaged in participant observation, and monitored the work undertaken by the project. This document is the final evaluation report and has been prepared following the completion of the project. Two interim evaluations were prepared following the closure of each exhibition and contain more detailed reporting and analysis on the project. This report summarises the project and the findings of the evaluation. The interim evaluations can be consulted for further detail if required.

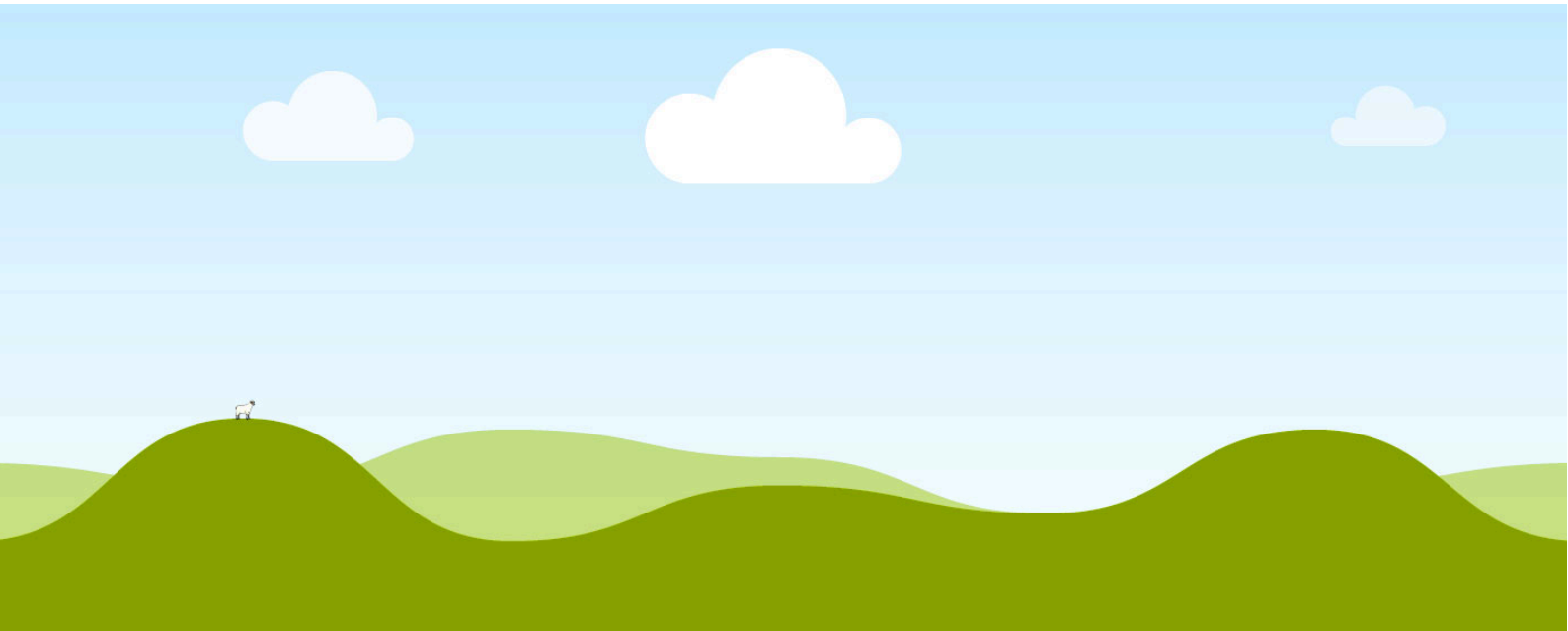
INTRODUCTION

Folk customs in Britain hold an enormous place in a collective identity that is at once diverse, creative, evolving, and historic. However, the material heritage of folk customs is always at risk: it is in use, often intangible, sometimes ephemeral and designed to be destroyed. It has historically lacked value to heritage and arts institutions. Folk customs themselves are also at risk of being lost due to processes of change, from the mobility of communities of practice to the loss of skills. A perception of folk being “of the past” has meant that heritage bodies have not supported the continuation, revival, or creation of new folk customs. Entwined with this is a perception of folk as “belonging” to embedded groups and being exclusive to other groups.

However, a quiet change has been occurring over many years and Britain’s folk scene is now flourishing and growing. New and reinvigorated Morris sides have bloomed; folk costume traditions have been resurrected in street parties as well as protests; the Notting Hill Carnival celebrated its 58th anniversary in 2024 – a well-embedded folk carnival tradition by any standard of heritage time-keeping, and contemporary with the 1960s revival of other folk customs. Yet no major exhibition of folk costume and living folk traditions has hitherto been held in Britain. While an interest in folk art and skills periodically resonates, and there are significant folk art collections, folk customs, performances and traditions are seasonal events which flourish and end, before resuming again as their cycles dictate. In recent years many crafts have begun to flourish again, often undertaken by those who are self-taught. Folk custom and costume enlivens social media and appeals to new audiences. It is both a ready subject for exploration, as well as a ready vehicle through which to create and engage.



In this context, Making Mischief partners received £249,007 from the Dynamic Collections stream of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to deliver two exhibitions - the first of their kind on such a scale - at Compton Verney and at the London College of Fashion. The project aimed to use folk costume and dress to directly engage and interplay with the pasts, present and futures of these themes, to explore issues of gender, sexuality, race, identity – inclusion and exclusion – and to highlight the expanded and inclusive world of folk custom to new audiences while inviting those familiar with it to redraw its boundaries.



PROJECT AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The aims of the Making Mischief project as understood by this evaluation are principally:

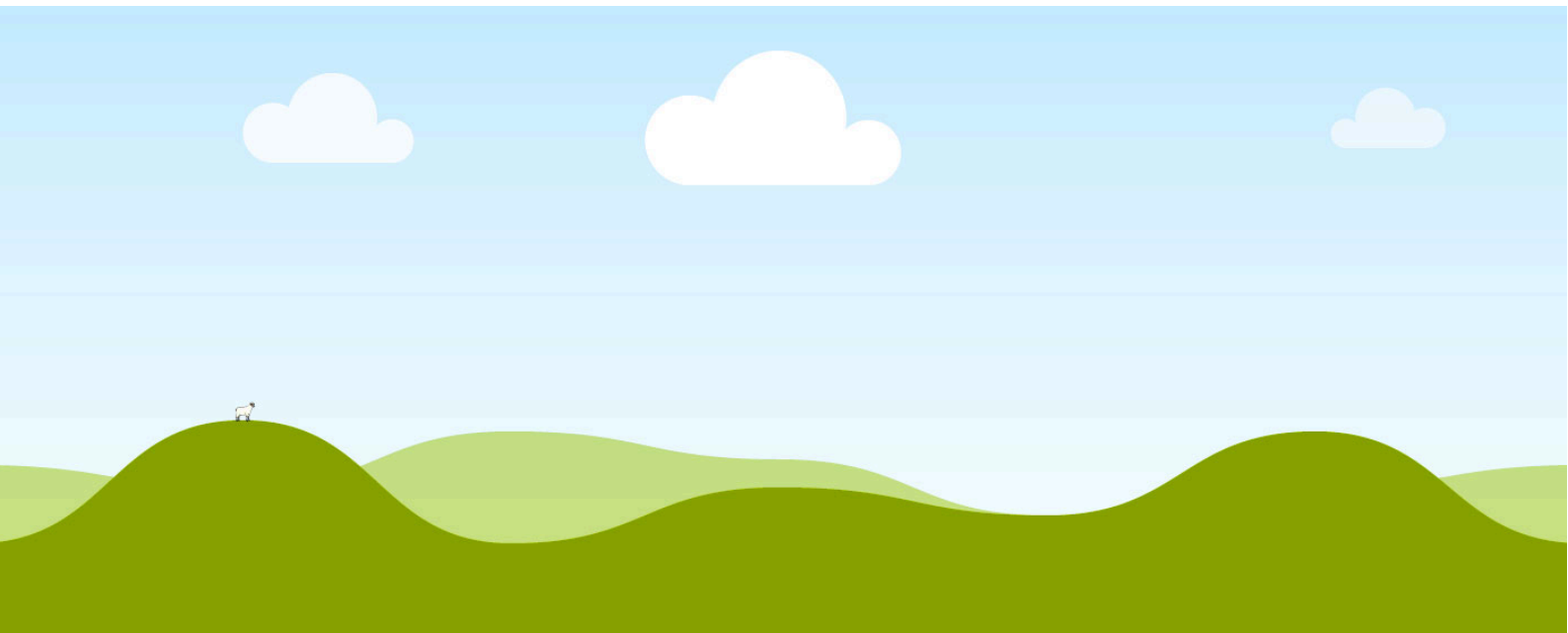
To showcase for the first time an expansive selection of folk costume alongside contextual historical and contemporary exhibits in order to demonstrate its breadth and vivacity, while challenging common tropes:

- That it is exclusive, belonging only to very delineated places and communities
- That it is necessarily based in “centuries-old tradition”
- That it is the domain of the “pale male”
- That it is static and impervious to change

And, in doing so:

- To demonstrate the collective crafts and acts of community-centred creation that folk perpetuates
- To engage new and old audiences with both content and crafts through the exhibition and through associated activities
- To demonstrate to collecting institutions and to the wider heritage sector the power and importance of folk tradition and the need to look after its material remains.

MAKING MISCHIEF



THE PROJECT TEAM

Making Mischief was a collaborative project between the Centre for Fashion Curation (CfFC) at London College of Fashion (LCF), the Museum of British Folklore (MoBF), and Compton Verney.

The Museum of British Folklore began its journey as a mobile museum in 2009. Since then, the museum has developed a model of location-based exhibitions and interventions in partnership – delivering over 30 exhibitions and events over its existence. Its catalogue of accessions has increased and includes important donated collections. Without a permanent venue, the museum's inventory is kept in storage when not on display.

Simon Costin – Director

Mellany Robinson – Projects Manager

The Centre for Fashion Curation, London College of Fashion, is a research centre within University of the Arts London, that focuses on fashion curation and how fashion and its culture and environment informs wider culture.

Ben Whyman – Research Centre Manager

Amy de la Haye – Professor of Dress History and Curatorship

Bre Stitt – Research Centre Administrator

Milly Patrzalek – Oral History Volunteer

Coordinator

Leila Nassereldein and Mirren Kessling – Cultural Producers

Mellany Robinson, Projects Manager at MoBF also joined LCF as Making Mischief Project Officer for a two-year fixed term period.

Compton Verney is an art gallery set within the house and grounds of a Grade 1 listed mansion. It holds six permanent collections – including a large collection of British folk art – and several temporary and touring exhibitions each year. It has a strong track record in engagement and in special events – allowing artistic and other interventions to augment exhibitions.

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Oliver McCall – Senior Curator

Abigail Viner – Director of Creative Programming

MAKING MISCHIEF

KEY FINDINGS

1: An invitation to engage

The Project Team conceptualised both exhibitions and surrounding events and activities as part of a broad, open and engaging understanding of folk that sought to - and succeeded in doing so - showcase an always-evolving, always-becoming, lively and enlivened folk scene. This conceptualisation was both “shown” and “told” allowing audiences to develop their own understanding of folk, but offering an encompassing vision that moved and shifted just as participants did and do. Partners and practitioners involved supported and enhanced this conceptualisation.

23,465 visitors came to Making Mischief and Making More Mischief. 14,305 at Compton Verney, and 9,160 at LCF. This represents a high attendance figure for temporary exhibitions at Compton Verney and an extremely strong attendance for only the second exhibition to be held at LCF, a site which “in becoming” receives little passing footfall.

While attendance can range from below 10,000 to over 20,000 at Compton Verney, staff consider 10,000 an average. As venues were still recovering from Covid in terms of visitor numbers, and some disquiet was expressed by Compton Verney staff regarding this, this figure should be considered an excellent result.

Invigilators counted 9,160 visitors to Making More Mischief. The true total will be somewhat higher when breaks where the invigilator was not present are taken into consideration. As only the second exhibition to be held at LCF in its Olympic Park setting, there is no comparable data. However, we consider this total to be highly satisfactory, especially given the number of visitors with the express design of viewing Making More Mischief and for whom this was their first trip to East Bank.

Activities and events held in association with the exhibition achieved high visitor numbers and extremely positive engagement.

The most high-profile of these events were May Day After Hours events, with an accumulated attendance of 986. Over 1700 participants took part in other events and activities organised around the exhibitions.

All of these events were marked by a strong association with joyful creativity that spoke to a the demotic collaborative and community-oriented understanding of folk projected by the Project Team. This sense might best be conceptualised by the May Day events, where both institutions were overtaken by colour, performance, costume and an element of chaos and magic; and by small workshops in which participants - otherwise strangers to one another - shared stories of familial and cultural inheritance of making. It is hard to overstate the profound enjoyment that the events engendered.

MAKING MISCHIEF

KEY FINDINGS

1: An invitation to engage

The project team aimed to show British folk as always evolving and changing – and succeeded.

There is still a tendency to view folk customs as something stuck in the past. The visitor survey shows how the “livingness” and vivacity illustrated by the exhibition struck a chord. This was also something picked up in the extensive press. In particular, by pulling back the curtain on the length of time that a number of traditions have been operating – either revived or commenced from scratch – the curatorial approach invited active and creative response to tradition.

Building on the work undertaken at Compton Verney in demonstrating the continuance of folk customs in Britain, Making More Mischief went further in positioning the development and continuance of traditions, and in bringing them to a metropolitan audience. In doing so, it demonstrated how alive folk participation was, and how “in demand”, “even” in an urbanized setting. A dynamic series of talks, conversations and film screenings contributed to challenging preconceived conceptions and were well attended by folk enthusiasts and casual visitors. Visitor survey comments at both venues demonstrate this challenging of perceptions, with positive and surprised responses to the vibrancy of events and customs on show.

The project team aimed to show British folk as inclusive and to broaden the spectrum of what is considered a folk tradition, and who participates – and succeeded.

There is still a tendency to view folk customs as belonging to particular groups and regions, and perhaps implicitly to be “pale, male, stale”. By highlighting the involvement, and even central roles of “others”, and by showcasing traditions from immigrant communities as part of folk tradition in Britain, walls were pulled down.

Carnival costumes and a Chinese dragon costume were present at Compton Verney, alongside a window on LGBTQ+ participation in folk traditions, and women’s participation, and in Making More Mischief these elements were all further developed and better integrated into the exhibition. In addition, the positioning of sub-cultural and diasporic cultural traditions within the folk context broadened this positioning, enabling visitors to develop their conceptions and definitions. Both exhibitions opened up opportunities and invitations to visitors and activity programme attendees to join in – through making, or through seeking local customs and through encouragement to “join in”.

MAKING MISCHIEF

KEY FINDINGS

2: Expertise beyond the institution

Making Mischief and Making More Mischief had a highly developed sense of where expertise sits in the context of “folk” - an essentially demotic, social, “outsider”, non-elite - domain. The Project Team reached out to experts beyond the institution and to a very significant degree, allowed that expertise to drive the programme. This required agility and maleability and occasionally was an approach that could only hit the wall of the institution. Such collisions were negotiated with commendable and tenacious effort.

Making More Mischief brought the experts into the institution. x

Making More Mischief aimed to “hand back” expertise to those makers and participants and give them the opportunity to show and tell the stories of living folk. From planning and installation through activities, events and talks, these participants and makers were present – whether dressing and adorning their mannequins, or explaining customs to visitors, performing or conducting workshops. This richness and diversity took the exhibition out of the constraints of the museological, of the gallery, and was the most effective mechanism for demonstrating the dynamism of the customs, and showing the longevity of performance and making traditions. For many practitioners, this approach created a sense of ownership.

MAKING MISCHIEF

KEY FINDINGS

3: Folk lives in places

The Project Team worked to situate both exhibitions within their environment, leaning into local traditions and working with local practitioners. At the same time it strived to show a national picture. While there was inevitably criticism of omissions, this was greatly outweighed by enthusiasm for the discovery of the richness of resources both near and far. This interest in the thickness of place can also be seen in the general interest in seeing the customs and traditions of the nation. Significant feedback expressed a desire for “more”, for a home for the collection(s) on display, and for a permanence. This interest was expressed in both areas across all audience segments. The contrast between the two locales emphasises the strength of this approach, the richness of the resource, and the commitment and strength of the Project Team in its curation and coordination, and the appeal of the Team’s approach.

The project served to embed a sense of vibrant folk-life in London, especially east London, and also to help to embed LCF as a place for exhibition and activity at East Bank – a new cultural quarter – and succeeded at both.

While the urbanism and ever-changing nature of London, especially in a “new” place, such as the Olympic Park, does not immediately resonate with the concept of folklore and folk-tradition, historical or living, Making More Mischief brought the vibrancy of many diverse and varied customs spectacularly to life. All these customs are living, and all have decades (at least) of antecedence evidenced in the exhibition. East Bank is emerging, and the thousands of visitors to the exhibition contributed to the creation of a cultural atmosphere in an area that must build its own relationships with its publics.

There is an appetite for folklore in the museological context that is embedded in its vibrancy in the present.

Visitor and participant numbers show a strong appetite exists for learning more about folk customs, and this appetite has undoubtedly been bolstered by the expansive understanding that the project embraced and imparted. We found visitors to be almost universally inclined to visit a permanent museum location for the Museum of British Folklore, and we found visitors were left wanting “more”. The project represented many constituencies which are unrepresented by other institutions. These constituencies visited. As did new audiences, drawn to both venues due to the exhibition content. Both were prepared to travel great distances. Visitors with no particular link to the exhibition were just as enamoured by it and also engaged in activities. There is a demonstrated appeal of the project’s themes and content. The appeal also speaks to a growing desire for a developed understanding of British culture that is both embedded in tradition but is also inclusive and creative.

MAKING MISCHIEF

MISCHIEF IN NUMBERS

23,465

TOTAL VISITOR NUMBERS

COMPTON VERNEY: 14,305

LCF: 9,160

1,700

TOTAL ACTIVITY PARTICIPANTS (C)

COMPTON VERNEY: 800+

LCF: 900+

986

TOTAL MAY DAY RAVERS

COMPTON VERNEY: 526

LCF: 460

8,456

VOLUNTEER HOURS

18

ORAL HISTORY VOLUNTEERS

25

**ARCHIVE QUALITY ORAL
HISTORIES**

4,643

**ORAL HISTORY ONLINE
LISTENS**

11

AQUISITIONS

MAKING MISCHIEF

MISCHIEF IN QUOTES PROJECT FOLK

“We’ve created really wonderful and lasting relationships with different communities... We’ve been able to do things that in the history of Compton Verney have never been done before – like showcasing the work of 100 refugees and migrant women on the front of the house...”

Project Partner

“There’s a huge appetite for people to be able to connect with British cultural heritage in a positive way, and people don’t know how to do it. Having something with this kind of aesthetic and this way of appealing to the general population and not just folkies is really important. There’s a huge appetite, and more than that, there’s a real need.”

Advisory Board Member

“I’m so happy with it!

It’s been so long in the making. It feels like it’s having its moment. It gladdens the heart to see it out there doing what we hoped it would do!”

Project Partner

“It really highlighted for us areas of work that are needed to develop that [folk art] collection. Stuff we already knew but it really brought it into focus”

Project Partner

“Several of our international students were commenting that it made them think again about the connection of their work and the work they were producing here, to the crafts and practices and elements of folk making from the communities that they belong to.”

LCF Staff Member

“The fact that there was an opportunity and funding for a gallery space to display these really important items of cultural heritage that don’t usually get shown, or get the centrality that they deserve ... that was very cool. It would be great to see future opportunities for that to be done, even permanently. [...] It was great that the NLHF had the vision to fund [the project].”

Advisory Board Member

“I totally recognized it [the vision of folk presented]. I was proud to be involved.”

Advisory Board Member

MAKING MISCHIEF

MISCHIEF IN QUOTES INCLUSIVE FOLK (VISITORS)

“It’s so important to show British folk cultures are and have always been diverse.”

“As a nation we need to be thinking about where we sat in colonialism; what our heritage is; and this can be a part of that work. We can look at some of the celebratory aspects and through that unpick some of the negative stuff. I think it’s really important.”

“I participate in morris and this has made me think harder about our inclusivity”

“I love folk but never felt like it was a welcoming place for anyone ‘other’ – this has changed my whole perception”

“It was super interesting. I loved the inclusion of Somali Atelier, Carnival Morris, Hackney Paracarnival – people might not immediately think of as folk.”

“[I have an] ambivalent relationship to folk customs but much in favour of their continuing evolution to reflect the changing, more diverse nature of communities. The exhibition reflects this very well.”

“A really hopeful vision of the true multicultural nature of the British Isles.”

“Fantastic exhibition! Loved the diversity of objects on display – and sensitive handling of the traditions that are problematic today.

Thank you Compton Verney!”

“I learned a little more about Somali traditions – I am the product of a diaspora child :).”

“I enjoyed the inclusion of Chinese and Caribbean folk customs and costumes and the acknowledgement of the important part they play in in British folk”

“I was surprised and pleased by the talk of the LGBTQ+ representation”

“This is the kind of heritage it’s very easy to connect with and feel positive about. Well done to all those who keep it going and share it.”

MAKING MISCHIEF

MISCHIEF IN QUOTES FOR&V&R FOLK (VISITORS)

"Folk" traditions have been evolving & reinterpreted since Victorian times."

"Great to see how loads of customs are still very relevant in peoples' lives now and are still wide-spread and enjoyed"

"I participate in morris and this has made me think harder about our inclusivity"

"I came to the UK five years ago. I didn't think that traditional customs are still so vivid and popular there. That's a nice surprise! :)."

"Great to see how loads of customs are still very relevant in peoples' lives now and are still wide-spread and enjoyed"

"As a person of dual heritage [Egyptian/British], I often lack a frame of reference for British & English culture. As an attempt to educate me, my grandparents on my British side often took me to historic/heritage and cultural events, introducing me to Staffordshire morris dance, mayday celebrations etc. It has since been mostly forgotten about until attending this collection exhibit."

"Great seeing how new customs are being formed and updated to modern landscapes."

"I loved the quiet joy of this exhibition, which opened my eyes to some of the many folk customs worth preserving and celebrating!"

"Loved the inclusion of urban movements and the on-going development."

"I didn't realize how many (traditions) there are or how they are thriving.
I love that carnivals are included"

"I feel inspired to revive and start up something locally"

"The whole exhibition was really insightful,
and has made me want to explore folk culture more"

MAKING MISCHIEF

MISCHIEF IN QUOTES JOYFUL FOLK (VISITORS)

“Wonderful exhibition – Celebration of outstanding Eccentricity”

“I brought my mum it’s so fun! Usually she thinks the exhibitions are boring”

Invigilation staff member

“As a crafter it was inspiring! I now want to dance!”

“My life is complete. A man just asked me if men are allowed to dance morris”

Morris performer

“Great to see how loads of customs are still very relevant in peoples’ lives now
and are still wide-spread and enjoyed”

First woman: “This is my third visit. I brought my friend who’s a seamstress.”

Second woman: “Then I had to bring my daughter and her wife”

Third woman: “So here we are!”

Fourth woman: “It’s wonderful!”

“Blighty is bonkers.”

“I loved the quiet joy of this exhibition, which opened my eyes to some of the many folk
customs worth preserving and celebrating!”

“What an unexpected experience – came back for a second look.”

“This was beautiful and having this kind of exposure
and celebration on Somali culture was so lovely!”

“It’s just the fact that people do things together that makes it”

“It was a joy getting to understand and witness the different rights [sic], costumes and
characters passed down to us from generations past. It makes me want to make my own
Jack of the green & Mayday Queen costumes as soon as I get home.”

MAKING MORE MISCHIEF IN BRIEF LONDON COLLEGE OF FASHION

Focus:

- Exploring the historical and contemporary traditions of British folk costumes.
- Challenging stereotypes of folk as static, exclusive, and "of the past."

Highlights:

- Exhibits:
 - 153 objects displayed, including 60 costumes.
 - Notable items: Rag Morris Olympic kit, Bridport hats, carnival costumes, and May Queen headdresses.
- Immersive Installations:
 - Three-screen video projections of raucous seasonal customs like Jack in the Green and tar barrel burning.

Community Engagement:

- Saathi House collaborated to create a banner displayed on the gallery's façade.
- Workshops and events like the After Hours event, which drew double the usual attendance.

Themes:

- Showcased the diversity, evolution, and inclusivity of folk traditions, including contributions from immigrant communities and LGBTQ+ groups.

Audience and Reception:

- Visitor numbers: 14,305 (above average for Compton Verney).
- Strong feedback highlighted the exhibition's success in reframing folk heritage as dynamic and inclusive.

MAKING MISCHIEF IN BRIEF COMPTON VERNÉY

Focus:

- Building on the first exhibition while emphasizing urban and diaspora narratives.
- Highlighting London's local, multicultural and evolving folk traditions.

Highlights:

- Exhibits:
 - Carnival costumes by Mahogany Carnival Arts, Somali wedding textiles curated by Numbi Arts, and costumes from London's Paracarnival group.
 - Additional displays on Pearly traditions, LGBTQ+ participation in folk, and subcultural contributions like Pxssy Palace.
 - Expanded film installation, including Chinese dragon dances and Notting Hill Carnival footage.
- Innovative Elements:
 - Somali Atelier: A dedicated space for Somali heritage, designed by Numbi Arts.
 - Pxssy Palace booth: Explored subcultures as evolving folk traditions.
 - Interactive workshops on straw crafts and costume-making.
- Themes:
 - Further challenged static definitions of "folk," integrating global influences and modern urban expressions.
- Placemaking:
 - Positioned LCF squarely as an arts and culture destination in the new cultural quarter of the Olympic Park.

Audience and Reception:

- Visitor numbers: 9,160 (high for a new venue in an emerging cultural area).
- Positive feedback on the inclusivity of exhibits and the vibrant representation of diverse traditions.

PROJECT PARTNERS, COLLABORATORS AND EVENTS OVERVIEW

Both iterations of Making Mischief worked with diverse partners and collaborators. These ranged from performance groups to teachers of crafts, to education organisations, to artists, producers, and choreographers. This section is not an exhaustive breakdown of all partners and collaborators but highlights some key collaborations at Compton Verney and LCF.

Numbi Arts

Numbi Arts is a London-based collective Pan-African arts organization focused on Somali heritage. Numbi Arts curated and designed the Somali Atelier exhibit at LCF, showcasing textiles, performances, objects, and costume.

Mahogany Carnival Arts

A London-based organization specializing in carnival costumes. It provided costumes for both exhibitions, showcasing Caribbean heritage within the British folk narrative.

Pxssy Palace

A London-based arts and nightlife collective, Pxssy Palace contributed a dedicated installation at LCF that explored subcultures and their proximity to folk traditions.

Saathi House

Saathi House is a women's empowerment organization based in Birmingham. Artist, Jane Thakoordin worked with Saathi House to create a banner displayed at Compton Verney.

Artists, Producers and Practitioners

Numerous makers, performers, and folk practitioners contributed performances, workshops, costumes, oral histories, and expertise.

Various activities and talks were offered alongside the exhibitions. Most of these were free to attend. The list below outlines the workshops held at the two venues and the number of participants. (All workshops had a significantly higher subscription than attendance rate - a general trend across participation activities.)

LCF talks and symposia

- Rethinking Folklore: In Conversation with Alys Tomlinson (58 attendees);
- LCF Sampled: Folk Customs and Costumes in May – Simon Costin and Andrew Teverson in conversation (70)
- Making More Mischief Symposium: Folk Costume in Britain (70)

LCF workshops

- Straw Brooch Making (x2) (7)
- Straw Workshop: Dolly and Token Making (7)
- Straw Workshop: Hat & Head Piece Making (15)
- Natural Dye Workshop (15)
- Buttons Workshops (x3) (41)
- Numbi Arts: Caleemo Saar Jam Session (x2) (57)
- Numbi Arts: Procession Workshop (x2) (18)
- Numbi Arts Saturday Art Club (25)

Compton Verney talks

- Curator In Conversation talk (est. 50)
- Doc Rowe (10)
- Lucy Wright (30)
- Curator tea and tour (18)

Compton Verney workshops

- Natural dyeing (12)
- Shield making (7)
- Dementia Café: Making and Storytelling Workshops (x4) (80)

EXHIBITS, ACQUISITIONS AND LOANS

153 objects were on display in Making Mischief (including the eleven Bridport hats), with further exhibits added to Making More Mischief. Over 60 of these were costumes. Eleven new acquisitions were made by MoBF associated with the project – four of these were purchased, and the others donated. This exceeds the six items aimed at by the project at its commencement. Further acquisitions were made in association with the project by Compton Verney, including the banners and cholis made for the project. In addition, several loans were secured for the project. Further successes of this arm of the project are the development of new relationships with practitioners and practitioner group, and the securing of archive-standard oral histories from makers.

Loans

Including, hand-embroidered morris waistcoats from Thames Valley Morris (dating 1972-2005) (from a call out ahead of Making More Mischief)

Acquisitions

- Boss Morris: gold pleather hand-painted vest and shorts with applique. Socks, bells and shoes
- New Brancepeth Revellers: Hat, top, trousers, shoes, feather stick and kazoo
- Beltane Green Man and May Queen costumes
- May Queen: headdress and dress w/hand dyed wool and embroidery
- Green Man: headdress, hand-embroidered waistcoat and kilt
- Mari Lywd: this is being constructed from horse skull and material
- Marshfield Mummers- suit covered with strips of newspaper + original storage box labelled 'Marshfield Mummers'

- Minehead Sailor's Horse: wooden frame covered with hessian, ribbons and fabric roundels, tin-painted head
- Orcadia Morris - sequined dress and silver pom-poms
- Gog Magog Molly - ensemble outfit: waistcoat, skirt, hat, tights, socks and boots
- Hobby Horse from Beaux of London Morris (1970s)
- Collection of pearly photos, postcards, news cuttings and dolls.
- Mahogany Carnival Arts costume and some archival elements.

Other connections were made through the call-out and other approaches, resulting in the inclusion of costumes and artefacts from the Worshipful Company of Vintner's Swan Upping traditions, Doggets Coat and Badge race, historic and contemporary clown traditions, Pearly King and Queen costumes and artefacts, as well as Hackney and Notting Hill carnival participants.

MAKING MISCHIEF & EXHIBITION COMPTON VERNY

Making Mischief: Folk Costume in Britain opened at Compton Verney on Saturday 11th February 2023 and closed on Sunday 11th June. The exhibition was divided into two parts with a distinct threshold between two exhibition spaces. In the open landing space at the top of the stairs before the exhibition, a mannequin was placed, wearing the Rag Morris (Bristol) Olympic kit, worn at the closing ceremony of the 2012 London Olympic Games. The contemporary nature of the kit, recognizably morris, and its position in a celebration also marked by its specificity and inclusiveness sets the tone for what is to follow. The colours of the kit were reflected in the design of the exhibition title, and in the text design which spoke to the handmade, “mischievous” nature of many folk customs.

The route through the exhibition set visitors on a contextual and historical journey beginning with a small oval portrait of Puritan leader, Oliver Cromwell – Lord Protector of the English Commonwealth (1653-1658) and apocryphal banner of Christmas; and ending with lively costumes, many of which are in use. The portrait, from Compton Verney’s collection, positioned the exhibition with a strong framing for the survival and rebirth of folk customs following a period of repression. Curated with a relatively conventional curatorial approach the first part of the exhibition mixed historical exhibits from Compton Verney’s and MoBF’s collections with contemporary exhibits. Within it, a maypole and life sized mannequins in costume shared space with other exhibits – folk art depicting folk art traditions (or their repression in the case of the painting *Three Sober Preachers*); and historic exhibits in relation to more recent counterparts (such as the May Queen exhibits).

An exhibit on “blackface” featured dolls made/collected by MoBF representing the blackface traditions. (We use the term “blackface” henceforth in this report though recognize how problematic both terms and practices are.) It laid out the origins of blackface traditions and the position of the Joint Morris Organisations in asking sides to withdraw from the use of blackface or face losing support from the associated morris organizations. The curators took advice from an EDI panel on dealing with these issues and did so with a view to promoting a more inclusive understanding of folk traditions and morris in particular.

An immersive film space showed three films of folk events projected across the full wall space with associated sound. From the collection of folklorist Doc Rowe and edited by Ruth Hogben, the videos featured contemporary traditions and provided a close-up, immersive, high-definition experience of some of the most raucous seasonal customs including Jack in the Green and tar barrel burning.

This experiential exhibit provided an exhilarating segue into the second part of the exhibition, in which contemporary costumes were privileged, an overt statement of the living and evolving nature of folk customs. The large exhibition space contained costume exhibits and allowed visitors to look very closely at their fabrication. Text panels gave detail of the traditions and makers. Some audio recordings provided personal context from makers and performers. In the centre of the room, allowing it full a la ronde viewing, was a Leeds Carnival costume made by Hughbon Gondor. Adjacent to it hung a painting by Tam Joseph – *Spirit of the Carnival* – acquired

MAKING MISCHIEF & EXHIBITION COMPTON VERNÉY

by Wolverhampton Gallery with the help of the Art Fund. The painting depicts a costumed performer surrounded by hostile police. Inspired by the Notting Hill Carnival, the painting's presence in the exhibition expertly, and startlingly, served to tie in the repression of Caribbean carnival to the historic repression of other folk tradition by authority forces detailed in the first part of the exhibition. Giving the costume this central space anchored British Caribbean carnival amidst traditions more conventionally associated with British folk tradition such as morris. A further carnival costume occupied pride of place in the entrance hall of Compton Verney on the ground floor. A striking display of "Bridport hats" - rescued by MoBF from a carboot sale - served as a stark reminder of the ephemerality and perishability of folk costume. Finally, a display of morris dolls lined the wall before the exit. These dolls were made by MoBF and sent to morris groups who were invited to decorate their dolls with their own kit.

X

An activity table next to the exit provided children (and adults) an opportunity to design their own costumes, which were then displayed on noticeboards.

MAKING MORE MISCHIEF EXHIBITION LONDON COLLEGE OF FASHION

Making More Mischief: Folk Costume in Britain opened at LCF on 9th April 2024 and closed on Sunday 22nd June. It was the second exhibition to be held in the gallery space of the new LCF building in East Bank area of Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, in Stratford, east London.

The exhibition differed from the first iteration of the project in Compton Verney in three key ways: the wider historical context that formed a considerable part of the Compton Verney exhibition was not part of the iteration presented at LCF; the LCF exhibition used five exhibition spaces which were disconnected (signage was in place to indicate which areas were part of the exhibition and invigilation, reception and security staff were present; and the LCF exhibition had a greater focus on folk traditions associated with London.

At the time of the exhibition, East Bank area was opening up, but was not complete. Other institutions new to the area – including Sadlers Wells and V&A East – had not yet opened and though there were open access routes from a number of directions, some map information on Google Maps was incorrect, some access routes were unfinished, and definitive signage was not in place. Nevertheless, strong visitor numbers were achieved from first time visitors regardless of East Bank's "becoming", though some visitors' critical comments addressed these issues rather than issues within the purview and control of LCF, let alone the curatorial team.

The building's frontage is glass allowing people outside the building to see inside two of the gallery spaces – the main gallery space, consisting of two large rooms, the narrower of these leading

off the main atrium into a larger, square room; and a lower ground floor gallery space, designated the "Somali Atelier". A further space at the rear of the building on the upper ground floor (main entrance floor) was used as a film theatre, a cabin-space installation situated within the upper ground floor atrium formed and contained the "Pxssy Palace" exhibit, and a corridor on the lower ground floor hosted glass-cased displays and a further screen display. The entrance to the main gallery is immediately to the right of the main entrance and was signified by the presence of two striking Carnival costume exhibits. These mannequins, made by Mahogany Carnival Arts, served to set the tone of the exhibition, indicating an expansive understanding of folk and its context with the primacy of carnival costumes. Carnival costumes were also prominently displayed in window-facing positions.

Entrance Gallery

Inside the first – narrower – gallery space, the Rag Morris (Bristol) Olympic kit mannequin that stood outside the entrance to the exhibition at Compton Verney was situated. This kit, worn at the closing ceremony of the 2012 London Olympic Games – the venue for which, now the home stadium for West Ham United FC, can be seen through the windows of the gallery behind it – further created an invitational atmosphere. L-shaped shelving beside the Rag Morris mannequin and against the window wall displayed the morris dolls. The facing, blank, wall was hung with large photographs of costumed figures, the work of the photographer Henry Bourne. In the centre of the space were cased waistcoats. The waistcoats were worn by Thames Valley Morris and embroidered with careful

MAKING MORE MISCHIEF EXHIBITION LONDON COLLEGE OF FASHION

iconography, explained in text plaques. Beside the cabinets, “Beaux”, a hobby horse costume, with police rider that was used by the London City Morris side in the 1970s stood beside a pillar. Along the window wall towards the end of the space, enigmatic carnival figure mannequins created by Ray Mahabir for Mangrove Mas Band, used at the Notting Hill Carnival and loaned by the Carnival Village Trust were oriented towards the window, “looking out” (the Midnight Robber) and in (Pierrot Grenade). Plaques outlining the history of Carnival and the background of the organisations represented were fixed to the wall.

This room provided an overview of the exhibition, representing community participation in its morris dolls, the festival extravagance of the carnival costumes, the skill, craft, longevity and revival of the customs on show as well as in the photographs, and the imaginative worlds invoked by costume. The integration and primary presencing of the carnival costume embedded carnival within the “British” traditions on show.

Main Gallery

The main gallery space, broadly a large “white cube” (albeit with one window wall) off the entrance gallery contained the costume collection exhibition, and was equivalent to the costume exhibition room at Compton Verney. Costumed mannequins were displayed on plinths with hessian backdrops on which the name of the costume’s folk tradition was appliqued. A smaller room than at Compton Verney, the costumes were more densely placed, spread around the walls, with a line of exhibits through the middle of the room. At the entrance, a gold Boss Morris dress and a carnival morris outfit presented different aspects of morris traditions (both were

present at Compton Verney). Entering the room triggered a recording of a Boss Morris dancer describing the meaning and process behind the costume. The two morris costumes stood against a room divider that blocked the window. Its reverse side features a large image of one of the Hastings Gay Bogies, decorated in greenery. Adjacent to it, and oriented towards the window, the Darkest Ooser (Blackthorn Ritualistic Morris) stood. In the window, oriented inwards but visible from outside, were costumes made for Paracarnival, an inclusive carnival band that has taken part in Hackney Carnival since 2015, with roots in the Brazilian carnival tradition. The Hackney Paracarnival costumes – a full King Momo (lord of misrule) costume, a hat with Windrush model and pipe-cleaner “one love”, an egg box hat with a Rio carnival costume – formed a group with a Zimba lion costume made by Yaram Arts. An audio recording was triggered by proximity.

These carnival costumes were new to the exhibition, delivering a London flavour to the London-based iteration of the exhibition. Further London additions that were added were Doggett’s Coat and Badge, a Thames rowing race costume with origins in the 18th century, Swan-Upping outfits, a Pearly King and Queen display, and a clown section. The clown section included a case featuring a selection of clown-faces painted on eggs – part of the Clown Egg Register, effectively a patent register of the faces of practicing clowns – usually in the care of the “Clowns’ Church,” Holy Trinity, Dalston, London, and Clowns International. Further new exhibits in the main costume gallery included items from the collection of the English Folk Costume Archive.

MAKING MORE MISCHIEF EXHIBITION LONDON COLLEGE OF FASHION

By the entrance, two plaques gave detail on current representation of LGBTQ+ folk in folk customs and tradition, and on the role of women in costume and costume making.

Film display

In the Wolfson Gallery space the three-screen installation was set up. This installation was a more expansive iteration than that shown at Compton Verney. Further films were added to the looping selection, including a Chinese dragon dance and film of the Pearlies. These inclusions broadened the original installations conceptualizing of folk, but through threading common elements (parade, music, performance, costume) this inclusion did not appear tokenistic.

Pxssy Palace

A booth in the main atrium provided another immersive experience, this time relating to the London arts/nightlife collective, Pxssy Palace. The booth took the form of a pink box decorated internally with costumes made by Pxssy Palace revelers, and a video installation featuring a club night and interviews with members. The exhibit was intended to further expand the boundaries of folk customs and the proximity of sub-culture participants to folk custom participants.

Somali Atelier

On the lower ground floor, with windows facing external walkways at grade with the River Lea as it flows through the park, a further exhibition room was designated the “Somali Atelier”. Numbi Arts is an established art organization based in London that is focused on the production of Somali cultural events and practices (see below) and more recently, in the acquisition and preservation of objects relating to Somali heritage.

The organization has a strong understanding of the inseparability of Somali history from British history. One wall was hung with textiles designed by Numbi members, based on traditional wedding-wear. Mannequins were also dressed in these textiles. Objects collected by or associated with Numbi members were displayed in a glass case on a plinth below the hung textiles. Other walls were hung with images of Numbi performers and performances. A video display showed a poetic film made by Numbi’s young creators that explored Somali wedding dance. The room also contained rugs, chairs and cushions to allow visitors and Numbi members to immerse themselves in the space comfortably. The space provided a discrete element of the exhibition that “belonged” to Numbi (see below for further discussion of this).

Lower ground floor corridor space

Exhibition cases along the wall of a corridor space -“Pearly Passage”- contained exhibits relating to pearl buttons, “Pearly” culture and traditions, and their histories. These cases contained historical background relating to the heritage of the pearl button industry, including newspaper articles and artefacts, as well as interpretive exhibits made in response to Pearly culture by LCF MA Womenswear students. The passage was intended for Pearly community members as well as visitors, to immerse themselves in Pearly cultural exhibits.

A three-screen installation opposite showed a 16-minute film by filmmaker Akinola Davies Jr. Tabanca is named for a Trinidadian word that denotes the depression that falls at the end of carnival. The film is an evocative framing of the culture around Notting Hill Carnival, its meaning and place.

MAKING MISCHIEF

VISITOR SURVEY

This section provides a summary of the extensive visitor survey undertaken at both exhibitions. A full understanding of the visitor reception of the project and analysis of the survey can be found in the Interim Reports. The visitor surveys conducted for both exhibitions reveal strong engagement, positive reception, and valuable insights into the exhibitions' impact.

Visitor Engagement

- Compton Verney:
 - A majority of visitors (over 75%) came specifically for the Making Mischief exhibition.
 - Strong attendance from both local and regional audiences, with a notable proportion of first-time visitors (48%).
- London College of Fashion:
 - 66% of visitors stated they came to see Making More Mischief, with others discovering it during a visit to LCF, the East Bank or the Olympic Park.
 - A mix of returning attendees and younger, ethnically diverse visitors.
- Museum of British Folklore
 - Around half of visitors at both venues were specifically drawn by their knowledge of MoBF, with almost all stating they would visit it at a permanent venue.

Inclusivity and Accessibility

- Visitors appreciated the diversity and inclusivity of both exhibitions, particularly the inclusion of Carnival, the Somali Atelier, LGBTQ+, and women's contributions. Survey comments indicate that this played a strong role in changing perceptions of folk...
- Many noted that the exhibits challenged their perceptions of "folk," redefining it as dynamic, inclusive, and relevant to contemporary society.
- Some visitors expressed newfound interest in exploring or reviving local traditions, inspired by the displays and workshops.

MAKING MISCHIEF

VISITOR SURVEY

3. Emotional and Educational Impact

- Compton Verney:
 - Visitors commented on the vibrancy of the costumes and richness of stories presented.
 - Interactive workshops and immersive video installations were particularly well-received, with attendees enjoying the experiential elements.
- LCF:
 - Feedback highlighted the deeper integration of urban and global traditions, with visitors praising the Somali Atelier, Carnival costumes, and Pxssy Palace installations.
 - The exhibition was described as thought-provoking, inspiring conversations about heritage, identity, and community.
 - There was strong appreciation of the “making” aspects of the exhibition, with some makers expressing that the perspective of making is usually lacking in fashion and costume exhibitions.

4. General Insights

- Both exhibitions demonstrated a strong appetite for exploring folk traditions in fresh, engaging ways.
- Visitors expressed appreciation for the high-quality curation.
- Visitors expressed appreciation of the opportunity to view costumes up close, gaining insights into their craftsmanship.
- The exhibitions fostered a sense of community, with events like the May Day Rave drawing diverse audiences into collective celebrations of heritage.

Overall Impact

The surveys highlight the exhibitions’ success in attracting and engaging broad audiences, challenging preconceived notions about folk traditions (specifically hitting the project’s aims) and creating opportunities for learning and inspiration. Visitors overwhelmingly expressed interest in similar future projects and the potential for a permanent Museum of British Folklore venue.

Resonant words used in a wordcloud survey activity, and in visitor responses across the survey are JOY, INSPIRING and MORE.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

CASE STUDY 1:

JANE THAKOORDIN & SAATHI HOUSE

Jane Thakoordin is a participatory artist and mental health specialist. She specializes in collaborations with communities and working with textiles. She is the founder of Birmingham Artivistas – an art collective working with socially engaged themes. Jane’s involvement with Making Mischief came after responding to a call out for textile artists with an engaged practice from Compton Verney’s independent producer. Through Compton Verney, Jane worked with Saathi House, an anchor organization enabling and empowering women in Birmingham. It aims to: “Enable the women of Birmingham to thrive in a multi-cultural, urban community while staying true to their heritage and background.” (“Saathi” means friendly companion.)

Jane had initially expected to undertake banner-making workshops with the women of Saathi House before the project shifted to a large-scale “wrapping” of the façade of Compton Verney.

In four full-day workshops, Jane and the Saathi House participants were able to share ideas and works, and problem-solve their way to delivering the commission. With the help of graphic designer Karen Haines-Lee, who became a named artist on the project, the banners were brought into being. The values that fed into the commission aligned with both Jane’s own, and with the ethos of Saathi House and the banners which eventually dressed Compton Verney’s facade were challenging and disruptive, while belonging to an aesthetic common across many traditions. The banners displayed an empowering and powerfully straight-forward invitation to think beyond façades.

The work speaks to the themes of folk, community, mischief, and arts, as well as costume, providing the building itself with its own. Wind chimes at the bottom of the banners “demand to be noticed”. Jane and her co-creators wanted the dressing to make a noise.

The banners were unrolled during the After Hours event of May 5th, with an introduction from Saathi House, Jane, and Compton Verney, ahead of performances. By mixing the event with music and dance performances as night fell, and by bringing different communities of makers into the same space under the banner’s directive to “unite and dance,” an ambience of May magic thrived: children made mischief with each other while adults danced.

The collaboration also used the exhibition to create new works to be accessioned by Compton Verney in its efforts to expand its folk collection and the boundaries of folk art within it. Exploring the exhibition of costumes, the women were drawn to the display of Pearly jackets. They produced a set of cholis which were displayed in Compton Verney’s folk art gallery and have been accessioned into the collection.

The women of Saathi House’s involvement meant that they had access to a site not normally open to them and had made them more likely to visit exhibitions that appealed to them in the future. Arrangements were made for future access, and the women felt that they had more of an impetus to visit other galleries, attracted by “living” work. They also used the collaborative workshops to design their own for working with children at Saathi House’s hub.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

CASE STUDY 1:

JANE THAKOORDIN & SAATHI HOUSE

“I was in this slight state of shock. I can’t do it. I can’t produce four massive, unique pieces of textile that are weatherproof to go on to these four columns. I thought ... that’s beyond my technical capabilities. ... And then it transpired that everything was absolutely fine. I could do it and I did.”

x

“It absolutely has impacted on my arts practice. As a consequence of getting the commission I realized I needed to get a bigger space to work. And having that studio space has been transformational, and it’s led to other things and it’s led to my creative thinking widening. I can’t really overstate the impact that it’s had. I feel much more rooted as a professional participatory artist than I did this time last year. Mainly because it’s something that I’m immensely proud of. People have seen it and it takes up so much space, which is something I try to do. On a literal basis. And it’s so majestic in that space. It was the instigator of the way I think and practice now. ... It’s made me forward-thinking and forward-looking”

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

CASE STUDY 2: LUCY WRIGHT

Lucy Wright is an artist and academic whose practice is at the nexus of feminism, folklore, class, and place. She has a longstanding relationship with morris traditions of the northwest and with carnival morris. She describes herself as a “folk world malcontent” and works with – and to presence – working class folk traditions, especially those with a trajectory somewhat different to more conventionally documented traditions, seeking to reintegrate them within the broader folk canon. She has worked extensively with carnival morris sides. She is the author of the *Folk is a Feminist Issue Manifesta*.

Carnival morris evolved contemporaneously with other morris resurgences in the 19th century, associated with town carnival traditions of the period. Unlike other traditions however, they are the domain of girls, with costume and costume-making following a “glitzier” path using shiny or sequined fabrics. Carnival morris dancers dance in teams, and often with pom-poms. Competitions are largely now indoors. Accompanying jazz bands have evolved over a similar period.

“They have all the credentials of folk art but have been written out of the history – girls’ carnival morris dancing, jazz kazoo bands, majorettes – these kinds of performances associated with British carnival have an incredible shared history with morris dancing but were excluded because it’s working-class girls.”

Lucy Wright was involved in early discussions regarding Compton Verney’s delivery of *Making Mischief* having previously shown work there. Her influential *Folk is a Feminist Issue Manifesta* lays out a pathway to a more open and inclusive, radical and powerful approach to folk, urging the end to the (deliberate or otherwise) exclusion of some traditions from the folk canon. In association with the exhibition, Lucy gave a talk relating to *Folk is a Feminist Issue* and ran two shield-making workshops inspired by carnival morris accoutrements.

In addition, Lucy helped to broker loans of two costumes for the exhibition: a dress from Orcadia Morris of Skelmersdale, Lancashire, and suit from the New Brancepeth Revellers Jazz Band, from County Durham. The donors recorded some information about the costumes and were able to visit their pieces in situ.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

CASE STUDY 3: MAY DAYS

Both exhibitions were timed to run over May Day and both venues held “after hours” May Day events featuring workshops, performances, talks and music. A further “Dancing Out” event at Compton Verney

Compton Verney hosts three “After Hours” events per year, in which indoor and outdoor events and activities take place during the evening. On May 5th 2023, a Making Mischief After Hours event drew a crowd of over 400 (326 tickets were sold for the event, with a further significant presence from others invited to attend for free, including volunteers, staff, and other contributors). The event offered the opportunity to look around the exhibition and other galleries, to eat at the café, as well as to attend performances and talks.

“It’s magic. Don’t you think it’s magic?
Everyone’s dancing together and I’m in
love with an owl”

Attendee, May 5th event, Compton Verney

The event took place on a beautiful early May evening that followed – and preceded – a period of inclement weather. Arrivals at Compton Verney’s visitor centre followed the woodland path to the house behind the all-female much lauded Boss Morris side and their beasts. Such a whimsical and enchanting entrance set the tone for the evening’s events. A silent disco was put together by member of Compton Verney’s Student Producer program (funded by ArtFund) with earphones available in the entrance hall of the building.

A film featuring work and performances by Jeremy Deller, Boss Morris, Lunatraktors, 2Faced Dance, KLF, and Acid Brass illustrated the breadth of modern folk use and interpretation. Compton Verney Curator Oli McCall hosted a conversation with Museum of British Folklore curators Mellany Robinson and Simon Costin about the exhibition which saw a full house in the Adam Hall room

“It felt very pagan and very disruptive and
very working class and all the things we
were about in our project.”

Jane Thakoordin

In the main courtyard, visitors gathered to see the banners and column-wrappings produced by the women of Saathi House and Jane Thakoordin unveiled on the façade. A rave brass band, Mr Wilson’s Second Liners, performed club classics before being joined by Boss Morris for a choreographed performance. The evening provided a showcase and meeting point for the themes and activities of Making Mischief.

“Haven’t they [Compton Verney
programmers] done well?”

Community builder, May 5th event

“I didn’t know the revolution was going to
start like this. I’m here for it.”

Attendee, May 5th event

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

CASE STUDY 3: MAY DAYS

On Sunday, 4th June, a day of morris dancing was programmed, in which several all-female sides performed in locations around Compton Verney's grounds. These sides comprised Aelfgythe, Chinewrde, Glorishears of Brummagem, and Black Annis – all hailing from the Midlands. A workshop by Boss Morris performers was fully booked. Lunatraktors folk band provided live accompaniment. Performances were scheduled, allowing visitors time to visit the exhibition and other of Compton Verney's amenities.

The site attracted significantly larger audiences than usual with over 500 visitors counted, rather than a more usual average of 200. As well as bringing casual visitors in numbers, the event also attracted a significant amount of performers and enthusiasts in addition to those performing on the day, many of whom gathered in the exhibition to find (or occasionally not find) "their" doll. By programming all-female sides, the event normalized women's morris. The public perception of morris remains at least partially as a male activity. While there is clear evidence of women's involvement in morris historically, and since the 1960s revival from which many current sides stem (the Morris Ring, one of the morris gatekeeping groups, only voted to admit women in 2018) notwithstanding the continued development of carnival morris as a predominantly women's form.

"Haven't they [Compton Verney programmers] done well?"

Community builder, May 5th event

The event proved a collective achievement for the sides present with several performers describing their morris journeys – many stemming from having been unable to join men's sides. One performer who had in the past – despite her knowledge of morris and her team's dwindling membership been excluded from the side – related with glee that a visitor to Compton Verney during the dance out had asked whether men were allowed to participate in morris, or whether it was only for women. (We note here Richard Macer's observation that men's sides do not necessarily exclude women, but provide homosocial dance spaces for men. Over our visits to Compton Verney however, in discussion with female dancers, we recorded that several had experienced a history of exclusion and lack of help from men's sides.) The performances brought life to the exhibition and it is notable that those visitors who had seen the performances were less likely to record their desire to see the costumes animated.

*"We did a routine!
Who would have thought that in one hour
we could do a routine!?"*

Boss Morris workshop participant

*"I didn't know the revolution was going to
start like this. I'm here for it."*

Attendee, May 5th event

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

CASE STUDY 3: MAY DAYS

On May 2nd 2024, LCF hosted a May Day celebration as part of its events programme. 920 people signed up for the event via Eventbrite, with 460 people in attendance on the night. Organisers hoped to engage the student body and a welcoming May Day party was held by the Student Union. MA Curation and Cultural Programming students also took over the lecture theatre, responding to contemporary British folklore traditions and practices, holding a fashion parade later in the evening.

At the welcome desk, attendees had the opportunity to sign up for workshops and tours. The exhibition was open throughout the evening, including folk costume-making – visitors worked with a variety of materials to create a folk costume which was then displayed on the mezzanine floor. A Natural Dye workshop with Sarah Weightman was extremely popular. Throughout the evening, Numbi Arts offered a suite of activities and performances including a May Day Parade – a Somali May Day procession – in which participants showcased Somali folk songs, dances and traditional dress. In the Somali Atelier, music and poetry performances as well as talks took place. The striking presence of Queen Arraweelo was present throughout the evening – her story told in the Atelier during the evening. Hackney Carnival's presence was celebrated with dynamic performances from Moulaye Diallo of Yaram Arts, in the SeneGambian Lion costume. Mattie the Clown clowned around, and elsewhere, tarot readings were available

from Megan Jessica, Mother of Spells, and a May Day ritual performed by Rosie Hill from Wild Ivy Retreats.

The café served meals and drinks and DJs performed throughout the evening. A local London morris side had been approached to participate in performances associated with the programme, and word spread, resulting in three sides attending and performing at the May Day Rave, London Pride Morris, City of London Belles, Blackhorse North West morris. These performances were accompanied by morris bands and took place both outside and inside the building. Film screenings of folk films hosted by their directors took place.

Many attendees had dressed up, and several workshop participants had returned for the evening adorned in the crafts they had made. Curator Simon Costin, green, and festooned with greenery, led a sold-out tour of the exhibition, with more visitors joining it as it went round.

As at Compton Verney, the evening event showcased numerous faces of folk celebration, and visitors were able to move between worlds, between sub-cultures of dance and morris performances. The May Day Rave animated the folk on display, giving life to the ideas of project, and involving significant numbers of participants and visitors in its outputs.

*“Costumes are transformational, sexy:
they lead you into community beliefs!”*

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May Day Rave attendee

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

CASE STUDY 4: NUMBI ARTS

Numbi Arts is a London-based “Somali-led, African-centred” organization formed in 1998 and dedicated to platforming contemporary arts and culture of the Somali diaspora. Numbi works in collaboration with other institutions, as well in producing its own events, working with artists, poets, and performers. Numbi presences the Somali diasporic community in Britain, and recently crowdfunded and sourced “the Somali Museum”, a virtual as well as real assemblage of Somali artefacts and activities, associated with Numbi associates. Numbi Arts positions Somali heritage as an integral part of British heritage too, noting that the UK has the highest population of people with Somali heritage outside Somalia, with many several generations resident in Britain. It is a living culture, and the Somali Museum seeks to subvert the idea of the dead culture of museums and instead celebrate living traditions.

Numbi focuses on Somali cultural practices and Numbi Art’s practitioners do not necessarily consider these practices as “folk”, and similarly, Making More Mischief’s curatorial team did not always consider some of the traditions Numbi worked with as in line with its curatorial direction. Much of the heritage Numbi has worked to collect and presence might be more meaningfully considered as everyday cultural aspects – wedding traditions, for example – rather than the exceptional and unusual traditions that were Making More Mischief’s primary focus. Other costume and story-telling traditions were more analogous, and musical customs were more relatable to ongoing folk music traditions associated with the customs on display elsewhere in the exhibition.

“We’re a little bit selective. We like to invite you into our space. ... Creating a space within an institution is interesting when you’re testing out ideas for a living community.

Numbi Arts member

Negotiating these differences of definitions, and renegotiating Numbi Art’s presence in the project ended up being a worthwhile if intensive exercise for the parties and personnel involved. An exercise complexified by the boundaries of the institution.

“We say we’re a public building but we don’t have prayer rooms on the public floors; we want to do workshops where the women get dressed up but we don’t have changing rooms where the women can be separate from the men... things like that that are things to consider if you do genuinely want to be a community-facing programme ... It’s really frustrating when you are DIY, community embedded, when you come and work with a big institution.

At every Numbi event there’s [home-cooked] food. LCF has big contractors and we couldn’t work around it.”

Project Team Member

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

CASE STUDY 4: NUMBI ARTS

An independent space was negotiated which Numbi participants could use as a meeting and activity space, and could be closed off if required. This enclosed space allowed a community of practice within LCF.

Numbi Arts' participation in the May Day Rave proved an enormously popular, enchanting, edifying and enlightening experience. Visitors were welcomed into the Somali Atelier with Numbi Arts participants on hand to introduce and interpret elements of the space.

“The event we ran at the May Day Rave was one of the most beautiful things we could ever have done [...]

I think it was really helpful for younger audiences: they don't often experience the folk culture. Second generation Somali communities might experience it at a wedding, maybe, so for them to experience that and to hear music that hasn't been sung before – and participate – and the young people had a private space where they could sing together and they could sing Somali folk songs that they haven't sung before. That couldn't really be shared. That was probably one of the most magic things. On these nights, we had pizza and the musicians came in.”

Project Team Member

Performance poetry and musical performance were programmed and drew considerable crowds. The presence throughout the night of Queen Arraweelo – a Somali folk hero – was a personal highlight for many attendees, including the evaluation team.

LCF's curatorial team supported the Numbi Arts curation project. Kinsi Abdulleh (Numbi Arts co-director) was awarded an Early Career Curator position offered through the project's funding. Kinsi is established in community arts and production, but has had – like many practitioners whose careers have taken community-driven paths – little formal support. The Early Career Curator position enabled her to build on and develop her expertise, and to benefit from the time and expertise given by project curators. Amy de la Haye has joined Somali Museum's Board of Trustees, illustrative of an evolving relationship.

Visitor survey demonstrates the popularity of the Somali Atelier, and its deepening of Making More Mischief as a whole. While – as with sub-cultures – these traditions might be seen as proximal to folk customs rather than being unambiguously folk, the work of Numbi Arts in maintaining, archiving and recovering cultural memory, objects and practices, and the sharing of this work through static exhibition, film and performance, provided a lens with which to understand the folk traditions on display in the main gallery – “folk is what folk do” – and the ease in which groups under varied pressures can be forced to, or chose to, abandon folk customs. For casual visitors, a nuanced definition of “folk” was perhaps less important than for more embedded folk practitioners.

PARTNERSHIPS & COLLABORATIONS

CASE STUDY 4: NUMBI ARTS

“This was beautiful and having this kind of exposure and celebration on Somali culture was so lovely!”

pix

“I learned a little more about Somali traditions –I am the product of a diaspora child :)”

“Numbi Arts – such an amazing ethos towards social history, British inclusion and social access!”

“Great to see the aunties taking up space!”

“My friend helped me to put on the exhibition. Also, I’m half Somali and never get to see Somali representation in arts or fashion.”

Numbi Team Member

MAKING MORE MISCHIEF SYMPOSIUM

A day-long symposium was held at LCF - Making More Mischief: Folk Costume in Britain – with presentations and talks, conversations, and q&a events by the curatorial team, collaborators and EDI and advisory board team members. 70 people were in attendance, representing a broad spectrum of interest, from academics to carnival participants to costumiers and textile students to those with a casual interest.

The Symposium's programme featured invited speakers – project collaborators or contributors – presenting their own contexts within the framework of the project. Doreen Golding, Pearly Queen of Old Kent Road and Bow Bells gave a personal picture of the duties and customs of the “Pearlies”. Arriving a little late for their presentation, Bettina Fernandez Sleeman and Richard Sleeman, founders of Hackney Paracarnival were placeheld by Kathleen, a member of Hackney Paracarnival, leading the Symposium attendees in a chorus of Bob Marley and the Wailers, One Love. The Sleemans' experience of Brazil's carnival traditions drove their creative vision for Hackney Paracarnival's costume traditions.

A keynote presentation was given by Chloe Middleton-Metcalf, researcher and practitioner specializing in English folk dance and costume. Chloe holds the first doctorate in post-WWII folk dance. She was part of Making Mischief's EDI committee. Her presentation explored definitions of folk, with special regard to costume. It provided a strong and inclusive theoretical underpinning to the project's approach, exploring the survival, adaptation and becoming of folk customs with a powerful understanding of how customs continue and thrive. A participatory exercise invited audience members to vote on

items of clothing “folk or not folk?” set a baseline for simple, yet expansive and thoughtful boundaries in which to define folk without being didactic.

Mattie Faint, “Mattie the Clown”, archivist of Clowns International, presented his life as a clown, with a resonant powerpoint that brought to life his costumes, some of which were exhibited in the main gallery space. The afternoon's final contributor was Numbi Arts' Kinsi Abdulleh, whose adept presentation of the work of Numbi, and the elements of the Somali Atelier opened another generous window onto Making More Mischief's components.

While standard in its structure, the Symposium was unusual in the diverse experiences of its key speakers. Their presentations and presentation styles brought life and animation to the areas of the exhibition that pertained to their content, as well as insight into their creative methods. The Symposium was hosted by the curatorial team who were skillful in maintaining momentum and in steering and supporting less experienced presenters. Question and answer sessions provided attendees with generous opportunities to further their understanding with each of the presenters.

Attendees were stimulated and moved by the range of presentations and their insights into their practices. A “closed” world had been generously opened with an unusual honesty and a spiritedness that might be expected of folk but that is often missing from academic forums. Threads of commonality were striking, from the primacy of costume and transformation, to an eagerness to honour lineages and layers of tradition, custom, and sharing entertainment.

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

1: A wider range of people will be involved with heritage

The heritage represented by the Making Mischief project has the power to involve hugely diverse groups. The project partners hoped particularly to bring in local communities, especially those outside core heritage segments. At Compton Verney, this included refugee communities that were housed locally as well as young people from local communities and visitors to its Dementia Café. While the former constituency could not be reached, the project overall was successful in involving significant numbers of people from across many areas. As well as over 9,000 visitors to the exhibition, nearly 900 people took part in workshops, talks and other activities run by the project. A further 460 people attended the May Day Rave. 2,750 Making More Mischief maps were printed and taken by exhibition visitors.

Of visitors surveyed, 22% stated that Making More Mischief was their first visit to a costume or fashion exhibition.

Saathi House

Birmingham-based Saathi House – an organisation that works to empower women from immigrant communities – became a community partner through the participatory art work run by Jane Thakoordin. Further, the participants of this part of the project created work that has been accessioned by Compton Verney. The independent producer working on this element of the project found that the women were now more likely to consider visiting gallery and museum sites with which they might previously not have engaged. In addition, the women used the project to develop their own arts sessions for children. A heavily discounted access arrangement for the women and their families is now in place.

Dementia Café

Compton Verney's Dementia Café is well established. Making Mischief provided the theme for four of the monthly café workshops.

Carnival Morris

While their folk culture is a form of heritage in itself, carnival morris is a folk tradition that lies outside of the mainstream canon. Participants who had worked previously with artist Lucy Wright loaned/donated costumes from their performances that were included in the costume part of the exhibition. Although only a few of the group visited the costumes in situ and Lucy Wright felt a stronger engagement could be pursued with a group that she describes as “predominantly working-class girls”, this engagement represents an opening and could potentially be developed.

Workshops

Workshops introduced participants – many of whom had never worked with the materials before – to craft heritages including straw work, flower work, and button work. Scribeasy used components from the exhibition to encourage young people to build stories based in folk heritage.

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

1: A wider range of people will be involved with heritage

Young people and student engagement

Motionhouse Dance co-produced a parade at Compton Verney performance with 20 local children aged 8-12, many of whom were reached through carer support organisations, Warwickshire Young Carers and Home Start Warwickshire. Compton Verney continues to work with these organisations and young people

Volunteers

Oral history volunteers developed considerable understanding of folk heritage, and many have continued their engagement, working with archives, and developing their own projects to deepen place-based and people-based heritage understandings.

Numbi Arts

Numbi Arts is an intergenerational project, principally working with the Somali diaspora, but open and extended. Numbi brought a new constituency to the project and to LCF in general, many of whom would not ordinarily take part in such projects or wish to work with large institutions. With Making More Mischief, Numbi brought younger members of its wider collective into LCF to develop their own directions for the project. It opened links between older community members and younger people, enabling intergenerational transmission and access to traditions that are not always passed on. This was a particularly strong component of the project as a whole.

Blackhorse Northwest Morris

As an excellent example of heritage as a creative process, Blackhorse Northwest Morris asked the project to help it to develop new costumes. Students from LCF's Costume for Performance BA course will work to develop these.

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

2: Heritage will be in better condition

Part of Making Mischief's remit involved reaching out to costume custodians to come forward with costumes for loan, or accession by donation or purchase by MoBF. Initial proposals were for the acquisition of six folk costumes, which, it was anticipated, would not fit the requirement for "heritage" objects to be older than 10 years.

In all the project resulted in several accessions. This, together with the work involved in exhibiting existing accessions, has led to the conservation of those items that have been accessioned and plans for their conservation into the future. In addition, a potential loan was identified as too fragile for display but interventions have been made which will improve its condition and ensure its future conservation. Further collaborations with bodies that lent items to be exhibited led to discussions with Mahogany Carnival Arts over the potential accessioning by collecting bodies including MoBF of festival costume-maker Clary Salandy's archive of sketches and costumes.

Clowns International

A rare 1930s clown costume loaned by Mattie Faint of Clowns International for Making More Mischief was found to be in fragile condition. LCF's Centre for Fashion Curation are working with Mattie to secure funding to secure the condition of the costume, and to develop Clowns International's conservation protocols and future exhibition and loan plans.

Oral Histories

25 oral histories from practitioners and makers involved in folk performance and making have been recorded by the project, and a further ten oral historians trained, several of whom have already continued their involvement in heritage participation and protection. The oral histories represent important records of hitherto undocumented practices, and certainly represent the first admission of these histories into repositories that are fully committed to their longevity.

Numbi Arts

Numbi Arts is an established and important player in heritage-making with particular reference to the Somali diaspora. This diaspora has been established in Britain for 500 years, and Numbi have a track record of working successfully with many arts institutions. While old hands at engaging with heritage, and while it has an extremely sophisticated heritage and understanding and philosophy, collaboration with the project has enabled further development of its curatorial project and has directly engaged upwards of 20 young people – with diverse understanding and views – in heritage, through transmission, skills development, and support to undertake creative heritage practice.

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

3: Heritage will be identified and better explained

Making Mischief was the first large exhibition of historic and contemporary folklore costume and custom. As no museum focuses specifically on folk costume, and as it is often perishable and has historically not been deemed worthy of preservation or exhibition, the successful rendering of the exhibition in and of itself supports this outcome. Using call-outs on social media and working with networks and contacts to spread word of the exhibition, the project gained traction within practitioner communities, with community members offering to loan important and highly relevant artefacts, and also leading to the donation of some costumes to the MoBF and other collections. These costumes may otherwise have been lost, not having been identified by heritage organisations as significant, and not having been seen by their owners as of interest to heritage organisations.

In addition, the project sought to bring forward a number of aspects of folk to a wider audience, in particular its continued existence and flourishing, its diversity, its continued development and evolution, and the strong contribution of immigrant communities to that flourishing and evolution.

The history of folk customs and costumes:

Making Mischief at Compton Verney drew out a narrative for the development and suppression, evolution and resurgence of folk traditions over the post-medieval period. It used some items from Compton Verney's collection to illustrate earlier periods, providing vivid contextualization. Placing these items into a context in which they serve to illustrate themes gave an added layer to their exhibition (eg. Three Sober Preachers). Older exhibits placed in a context with more recent examples of their type also strongly illustrated the persistence of folk traditions as well as the work of revivalists. In addition, it highlighted the crafts and skills of those involved, again drawing threads from the past to the present.

Drawing out links and intersectionality:

Making Mischief drew bold threads of commonality between different folk traditions, placing the dance, costume and performance aspects of morris adjacent to the dance, costume and performance tradition of Carnival. This took the inclusion of Carnival far beyond tokenism, making it integral to the exhibition, giving it a seasonal prominence among other traditions.

While discussions of definitions were had around the inclusion of sub-cultures and traditions that might be defined as custom, rather than folk, bringing in Numbi Arts and Pxssy Palace as major collaborations further expanded understanding of heritage. As marginalized cultural groups that represent the influence on and influence of mainstream culture, the presence of these collaborators provided food for thought as living traditions. Reciprocity was offered through skills development and exposure.

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

3: Heritage will be identified and better explained

The evolution, survival, and contemporary flourishing of folk costumes and customs (1):

With such a strong focus on folk as both extant and historic, Making Mischief provided an exceptional opportunity to understand heritage as something that is not dead and not static, rather something that can continue and can evolve. This aspect provided a “lightbulb moment” for many casual visitors whose understanding of folk was as inaccessible and unchanged tradition. Emphasis on inclusion, change, new sides, alongside exhibits, contextualized how folk responds to the needs of contemporary communities. The immersive element of the exhibition featuring film from Doc Rowe’s collection, edited by Ruth Hogben, brought some of the traditions to life offering visitors the experience of being in the heart of a living tradition. Again, this provided an exceptional entry into heritage as a bridge between past and present.

Making Mischief’s positioning of folk as something that can be made and remade, and that can evolve and change allowed it to confront problematic elements without defending them, and to support and make propositions for change. With the help of an EDI panel, the project partners engaged with aspects of folk heritage that have found themselves more and more under the spotlight, in particular, the use of blackface by some morris sides. Visitor feedback showed that both general and specialist visitors appreciated the stance that Making Mischief took on the matter. While there were a number of responses to this that pushed back at the narrative (with particular reference to unpicking

the timeline suggested by linking the practice with the rise of US minstrel shows, and to highlighting the availability of soot, especially for sweep sides), among those that disagreed with the details of the portrayal, there was also a strong thread among folk practitioners or researchers that accepted that the practice needed to have a light shone upon it and to be dispensed with. Among casual visitors, the discussion was met with favour as providing context – as well as another example of how folk can evolve – to an issue that was clearly distasteful to many. One visitor in conversation expressed how the “facts” of the roots of the tradition made little difference to her and related a story in which she and a friend had witnessed an performance in which performers wore blackface and it had been impossible for them to ignore its immediate visual impact and how it was understood by the audience of primarily non-expert white people, and themselves as non-expert black people. A community organizer visiting the After Hours event picked out the exhibit as particularly strong. She too highlighted the problem of perception over the practice: few people encountering it know the finer arguments of its development. She praised the exhibit for its unequivocal support for the ending of the practice without falling too heavily on presenting a “balanced” understanding. Here we highlight how the exhibition showed how heritage can develop and change. Having successfully fleshed out a narrative of folk traditions as living, Making Mischief could easily present the case for the elimination or adaptation of blackface traditions.

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

3: Heritage will be identified and better explained

The evolution, survival, and contemporary flourishing of folk costumes and customs (2):

With its juxtaposition of traditions that are seen as historic – represented by historic and contemporary costumes – and those that are considered more recent, Making More Mischief furthered understanding of heritage as a set of ongoing practices and evolutionary forms rather than as something of the past. This facet of the exhibition was strongly noted by surveyed visitors as something that made them think differently about folk customs. It was exemplified by the expanded film collection shown at LCF, by a broad and relevant collection of costumes, and by the inclusion of the Somali Atelier and Pxssy Palace.

Drawing out links and intersectionality:

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Sourcing folk costumes:

Sourcing the costumes for the London exhibition saw the inclusion of clowns, Pearlies, Carnival, and river-related traditions. While there is unlikely to be any dispute that these traditions are heritage, the precarity and diverse ownership and archival traditions of the items borrowed for the show, and of some of the morris items also exhibited, highlight the vulnerability and perishability of these items, and the wealth of research and recording that is still to be done. Making More Mischief marks a significant stride forward in the identification and preservation of heritage costume traditions in Britain.

Social media and network call-outs led to loans and acquisitions – including of a morris hobby horse, and a wealth of embroidered morris waistcoats that contained within them stories and lineages of the morris side that made and wore them.

Oral histories:

The extensive oral histories undertaken of performers and costume-makers provide an invaluable resource that may not otherwise have been collected. “A lot is in the look not the experience behind it”, remarked Julia Letts on existing understanding of folk costume traditions. The oral histories go deeply into making and meaning, expanding understanding of costume heritage considerably.

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

4: People will have developed skills

Making More Mischief was a collaborative project which invited participants and volunteers to develop skills. This outcome is measurable both qualitatively and quantitatively. The sections above and the project report give evidence in more detail.

Workshops

Craft and performance workshops were an integral part of Making Mischief. People of all ages were invited to participate through various means. See above for more detail and quantitative summaries. These skills were delivered by professional practitioners and covered diverse audiences from families and school children, to adult learners, to students.

Numbi Arts workshops augmented cultural transmission in the Somali community and other participants working with Numbi, and included music, storytelling, costume making and curatorial opportunities.

Oral histories

17 volunteers (of which, two became volunteer-mentors - their involvement bridging training at the Compton Verney iteration of the project to helping new volunteers at LCF) were given accredited oral history training by an experienced Oral History Society trainer. Their collected histories form a valuable part of the project's legacy, and their experiences already have had a tangible effect on their progression. One has volunteered as an archivist with a project participant (the English Folk Dance and Song Society), two have joined morris sides, one is furthering their education in an associated direction, and another is collaborating on a larger related project.

Curatorial

Project funding enabled Numbi Art's co-director Kinsi Abdulleh to develop her curatorial practice through the Early Career Curator position offered by the project. Kinsi's work in Somali heritage is extensive, but her training is informal. Collaboration and training with the project will benefit Numbi's projects going forward.

Pxssy Palace's co-curation of the installation developed the skills of its project collaborators.

Creative

Creative production allowed commissioned artists to develop their practices. These included Jane Thakoordin (see above) and Rosa Thorlby who created the Making More Mischief map.

Team

Various members of the Making More Mischief team extended their own skills in putting on an expanded project that included considerable community liaison and communication, developing co-curated projects, managing complex multi-faceted projects. MoBF's project manager received training in project management and attended two study days exploring co-curating, producing, and social justice in museums. This learning has been applied to MoBF operations and future projects and exhibitions work, especially in relation to working collaboratively with communities (from NLHF report).

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

5: People will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions

Making Mischief aimed to bring a greater understanding of folk customs to a wider audience; to highlight folk's absence from what might be understood as "authorised heritage discourse" (a concept developed by Laurajane Smith that positions much "heritage" as sanctioned and organised by state or other authority bodies); and to engender an actionable interest, encouraging more people to take an interest and to take part. It aimed to do this through highlighting the creativity and inclusion inherent in making and performing in folk customs.

Reaching over 22,000, and over 1,700 activity participants, the project's reach was extensive. For both folk enthusiasts and newcomers to folk, Making Mischief created an arena for an inclusive, creative, lively, accessible folk culture to be showcased. Visitor survey comments evidenced that this influenced visitor thinking, with the question *Has anything you've seen today made you think more deeply about folk?* answered positively by a high proportion of those surveyed, with the biggest categories of observation focusing on folk's evolution and changing cultures, the roles of immigrant communities in creating and sharing tradition, and in the diversity of traditions, as well as in the "joyful" creative aspects of craft-making traditions. As well as this, the appeal of the seasonal and natural aspects of folk has a strong appeal to young people and was marked in conversation among workshop participants and project team members. Several surveyed visitors stated that they would seek out their local traditions to support or participate. Two oral history volunteers have joined morris sides.

The diversity of presenters and traditions represented at the Making More Mischief Symposium was remarked upon by surveyed attendees. It is rare that such diverse backgrounds are represented, and often rare that platforms are offered. Kathleen, one of Paracarnival's creative members, who was present at a number of Making More Mischief's activities, became a de facto team member. Her rendition of One Love at the Symposium was a generous and open invitation for increased access to traditions and the possibilities for open forums, again remarked on by attendees.

Making More Mischief undoubtedly opened folk up to new audiences and developed greater appreciation for aspects that might previously not have been considered among many visitors and participants. Its legacy among visitors will be of a sustainable, open and diverse understanding of folk traditions.

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

6: People will have greater wellbeing

The underlying basis of Making Mischief was the joy, creativity and community inherent in demotic performance and participation. The colour and texture of the varied ways in which people chose to be among others in celebration of myriad activities is an inevitable bringer of joy to observers. Joy, fun, and inspiring were among the top five most common words chosen by visitors to express their experience. Similarly, feedback from workshop and other activity participants points to an enhanced sense of wellbeing through craftwork and community making. This spanned ages and abilities.

Surveyed visitors and participants also used a final field of the survey, *Is there anything else you would like to tell us about your visit today?* or other fields, including *Is there anything you would like to see done differently?* to express their thanks, appreciation, and enjoyment of the exhibition.

In addition, visitors who attended the exhibition while events were being staged expressed an enhanced sense of enjoyment. Many visitors during Dancing Out were observed to spend several hours at Compton Verney taking the opportunity to watch more than one performance as well as to enjoy the grounds and exhibition. At the May 5th After Hours, a sense of wellbeing was palpable – most clearly marked by visitors dancing and engaging with strangers. A number of visitors commented on the “magic” in the air. While these events are one-off, we mark that repeat visitors and others we have spoken to in the preparation of this evaluation continue to refer to the event as an unexpectedly meaningful highlight of their year.

We also note that the impact that creating partnerships with individual artists, educators, practitioners, and performers can positively affect individual working practices through validation, through encouraging expansion of practices and delivering bigger audiences, and can increase wellbeing this way. We note this with regards some of those involved in delivering the activity programme and those collaborating with the exhibition.

“Being seen” was also a common response to the exhibition, particularly from folk performance practitioners and makers. These people are tradition bearers, and many have weathered periods of deep disinterest or misunderstanding. Making Mischief and Making More Mischief showcased their practices with a focus on making and doing that showed the works relevance, creativity and community-orientation, presencing an importance to people and place that is not always acknowledged.

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

7: People will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions

The collaborating partners benefiting from Making Mischief develop resilience in different ways. For the Compton Verney, the project aimed to develop its relationships with local communities and to interrogate and improve on what is represented in its collections with regards the communities it is seeking to better engage with. For MoBF, Making Mischief offered a largescale engagement with a broader public through host venues, and an opportunity to grow its collection as well as to enhance its curatorial systems and commitments with a view to accreditation and opening a permanent venue. Making Mischief's focus on costume and on performance provided an excellent opportunity for engagement. As a "craft", regardless of skill level, costume- and textile-making offers itself as an accessible platform to engage multiple communities, as does dance. Using these vehicles, Compton Verney was able to collapse gaps between its ostensibly rarefied locale and appearance and new constituents. By "dressing" the building with work undertaken by the women of Saathi House, and by accessioning work by the women into the permanent folk collection, Compton Verney improved its resilience by opening itself to new audiences and by using art and craft to create rather than simply acquire. Its collection and audience are expanded and enhanced.

For the Museum of British Folklore, the positive press reception to the project heralded the strength of feeling that the exhibition would engender in audiences. The commitment and belief of its curators in bringing the collection to wider audiences has been validated by the enormous appeal across audiences that Making Mischief has had. Attendance at the exhibition has been high in comparison to other exhibitions at Compton Verney – an achievement during a cost-of-living crisis, and while the culture sector continues to recover from Covid. In addition, the EDI panel and the focusing of the exhibition around inclusion and the diversity of practices has allowed MoBF to expand its own approaches. The curators reflect that their work with the panel has helped them develop lasting changes to how they work around inclusion. There is a clear appetite – expressed by visitors directly, and discernible from the positive press representation – for the work that MoBF does, and for a permanent venue for the collection.

MAKING MISCHIEF PROJECT OUTCOMES

7: People will have learnt about heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions

For LCF, hosting a large, multi-platform, multi-partner exhibition in its new building, and the associated activities that took place help build a better understanding of its capabilities and capacity. In addition, generous collaborators help it to work better within the community it is now situated in and contribute to its reputation, as well as suggesting future collaborations. Opening the building to the public for events and workshops has a similar effect: the delivery of public-facing free activities created a cohort of people with no previous association who developed a familiarity with the institution.

The scale of the project, and the skills developed in the delivery of such a largescale project gives MoBF considerable resilience in project delivery. Discharging such a successful, one-of-a-kind project is an undoubted coup, contributing to the reputation of the organization. Visitor numbers and feedback demonstrates the appetite for MoBF's broader project. MoBF's project manager received training that has already been taken forward into other projects.

The networks of all the project team and partners have been expanded.

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

8: The local area will be a better place to live, work or visit

Compton Verney has a vibrant existing programme of events that deliver enchanting activities to local residents. Making Mischief looked to expand on this by offering a vehicle to bring in different communities. We note the development and strengthening of relationships with urban communities in Birmingham and elsewhere, expanding Compton Verney's "local" reach. As a venue with an entrance fee and accessibility limitations vis-à-vis public transport, Compton Verney has been working to develop new partnerships with communities excluded by these facts. In particular, Making Mischief has allowed it to develop partnerships with young carers in the region and with Saathi House.

The East Bank's evolution as a cultural hub in east London relies on the delivery of quality outputs that will draw new and old audiences to the area. Public engagement with Making More Mischief was in advance of the opening of other cultural institutions in the area and yet managed to draw a large audience. The data collected in this evaluation and by the project team demonstrate that people travelled from near and far to visit Making More Mischief, and that its London-focus was widely appreciated. Outreach from the project supported and made links with local groups, including Bow Arts, Numbi Arts, the Clown Museum, among others, as well as a number of London schools. All of these network nodes increase the cultural participation of east Londoners with an area still in the process of becoming. A number of surveys were completed by passers-by and people who work in the area. The growth of cultural output in the area, and the invitation to local workers to use the facilities of LCF contributes to the livability of the area.

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

WHAT WENT WELL

Making Mischief was an enormously successful project, designed to build iteratively. Its ambition was undoubtedly realized. This section outlines elements of the project that we consider went well – sometimes exceptionally well. This section is derived from conversations with the project team, staff and visitors at LCF, and activity participants and coordinators, as well as analysis of the project's events, feedback and documentation gathered along the way.

Exhibition (overview)

Both exhibitions were well attended. Making More Mischief was the second exhibition to be held in LCF's new building. Its visitor numbers were extremely high, especially given East Bank's continuing construction, and Making Mischief at Compton Verney defied staff expectations. The exhibition provided a cultural immersion in the colour, creativity and concept of many folk traditions. The project's expansive and inclusive approach made friends and fans of undecided potential folk-fans, and broadened outlooks of others. Its collaborations, and participation in events, brought life to the notion of "tradition".

Exhibition (getting up close)

Costume exhibitions bring visitors with costume and textile interest and expertise. Being able to show costumes in the round, or as near as possible to it, and outside cases allows these visitors – as well as those with general interest – to appreciate the fine points of making and craft.

Highlighting inclusivity and diversity in folk

Making Mischief privileged a view of folk that was current, contemporary, and open, without being patronizing and tokenistic, and while tacitly acknowledging complexities. Greater integration of these themes created a more powerful understanding of an expanded idea of folk in the iteration presented at LCF.

Working with the project team

Volunteers, commissioned artists and performers, and other members of the project team had extensive praise for the project team. The expertise that individuals brought to the room in terms of curatorial and production activity as well as general approachability and helpfulness was enjoyed, and the generosity with which MoBF shared their knowledge and expertise was particularly remarked upon. These attributes are easily lost in a pressured project.

Accessions and conservation

Issuing call-outs for costumes through social media and by alerting folk communities led to loans and accessions which deepened the heritage collections of the collecting bodies, deepened understanding of folk making and performance practices, and enhanced the exhibition. The project team was able to offer reciprocity to the groups and individuals that had lent costumes through support in conservation and in providing or finding institutions to accept items or collections, as well as through the public acknowledgement of the importance of the represented folk heritages. For Compton Verney, its accessions mark a distinct curatorial move into representation and creation. For MoBF, the acquisition of a Carnival Morris costume represents an expansive and inclusive move that bridges a gap.

MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

WHAT WENT WELL

Working with artists and performers

Many artists and performers joined the Making Mischief team along the way. These included a number of morris sides, visual artists engaged in folk or in other crafts, dancers and musicians. Living creative traditions bring life to the exhibition process – they show, rather than tell – and bring in new communities and participants who engage with them. The works produced by Jane Thakoordin and the women of Saathi House prove a highlight of the project and had a sustained impact on all parties. By making Compton Verney a location of “mischief” through dance, art and transgressive messaging, the locale opened itself to new audiences and allowed old ones to find and learn more.

By offering fair remuneration, we have found these relationships to have worked well and to have expanded opportunities for both sides as well as for participants.

Reflecting communities

Making Mischief had a strong appeal to communities currently or formerly engaged in folk activity. Seeing themselves reflected proved a validating and joyful experience to many, and inspired lapsed performers or enthusiasts to rediscover their interests.

Oral history

One of the training activities involved training volunteers in oral history. This had worked well at Compton Verney, and the same team again brought through a cohort of dedicated volunteers. They produced accessionable oral histories and with them, deepened understanding of the themes and traditions of the project.

Heritage in the Now

Heritage is a process in the present; an act of representing people and pasts in the now. Making Mischief’s process centred living customs – rather than privileging historical customs and making – and in so doing brought to life a community-oriented project. An approach that centres people does not necessarily marginalize things, but rather shifts the orientation to living practices, enabling an authenticity of representation where it is most needed.

Working with artists and performers

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MAKING MISCHIEF

PROJECT OUTCOMES

WHAT WENT WELL

Showcasing the “quirky quotidian”

The everydayness of folk tradition in tension with its out-of-the-ordinary event-ness was exceptionally well expressed. Making Mischief brought out the seasonality and anticipatory and durational aspects of customs. In an era of binge possibilities and instant acquisition, showcasing craft and performances that are seasonal, sometimes one-time only evoked a joy in anticipation, waiting, and making: slow entertainment.

“An invitation to engage”

One visitor wrote “thank you for the invitation to engage”. This sums up an element of the project which stood out: while not particularly participatory beyond the activity programme, the project hit a zeitgeist moment with many young visitors encouraged to engage and to seek out opportunities, and others feeling engaged and included in what for some has seemed inaccessible. Comments and feedback from some visitors show how they felt empowered to watch, to join, and even to create.

Carnival

The development of the Carnival section of the exhibition took the representation of carnival traditions within the folk context to a much higher level of understanding than at Compton Verney. While carnival costumes had been prominently displayed there, there was a sense that they were still slightly “othered”. The critical mass and juxtaposition with the large morris collections enhanced this understanding, and this was apparent in comments from visitors.

Training and educational activities

The activity programme that accompanied Making More Mischief tangibly extended the meaning of the project to a considerable number of people, from half-day making activities to engagement with schools and with children and families. The exhibition tapped into a community of London amateur makers that use Eventbrite to expand their skills through public workshops. Many of these crafters developed sustained interaction with the project visiting the exhibition multiple times, as well as events on the activity programme. Those that we spoke to demonstrably developed their understanding and abilities in crafts and in their relationship with folk customs. As one of the Scribeasy project managers – whose activity day was attended by 99 people – said, “The purpose of an exhibition is to stimulate people and enhance their lives. Nurturing the continuation of folklore, of storytelling, of making, and I felt that we achieved that.”

Enlivening East Bank

The East Bank is a place that is still in the process of being made. The Olympic Park is in places thriving, but the bold creation of a new cultural quarter is nascent. Bringing shows and performances to the area ahead of its completion made the area feel alive and brought an air of anticipation of what could be. For many visitors, this was the first time they had visited the Olympic Park, let alone East Bank, and for others, the first time they had returned since the Olympics. Giving visitors a reason to come to the park for something joyful yet purposeful, modern yet traditional, helps guarantee the area’s future.

MAKING MISCHIEF PROJECT OUTCOMES

WHAT WENT WELL

Making connections

For all partners, developing their networks – whether with community partners, with members of the folk community, local people, other institutions – is important. The project gave LCF the opportunity to embed more effectively in its East London home; for MoBF, the expansion of its constituency – via new relationships with the community, with new followers and interest, and with community and other groups – helps it to sustain itself and grow. For both, the project elevated their profiles amongst a number of relevant constituencies and highlighted each's expanded interests and advanced and ambitious project planning and delivery.

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This section acknowledges the successes of the project, as well as its struggles, and suggests methods of going forward. It takes into account and highlights those elements of the project that might have gone better as well as those that went well. It is designed to help and enable the future work of the Making Mischief project team, MoBF, Compton Verney, LCF, and the funder to build on the work done so far. We present questions and provocations for the project team to think about, and also for the extended team: this may include partners, team-members, or even funders, and invite them to consider the questions in the development of future projects. We acknowledge the tremendous effort to learn through the iterative approach of the project and consider it one of Making Mischief's strengths.

Project management and team coherence

The LCF iteration of the project appeared to have run more smoothly than the project's first iteration at Compton Verney with more secure resourcing and closer working between exhibiting institution and curatorial team. A longer lead-in meant that the tight time stresses of the first iteration (incurred due to staff illness, staff pressures and unexpected scheduling pressures), were avoided. During our evaluation we have heard considerable praise for the way that the venue project management teams and MoBF project manager have provided support and consideration to collaborators and commissioned project team members but note that those that worked on both iterations expressed how much more smoothly the second iteration went, and how much more enjoyable it was. We find the administrative management and communication to have been unusually effective and note how an iterative approach allows a project to develop and improve.

Relationships with project collaborators

Relationships need to be established well in advance. This was raised at Compton Verney as initially hoped-for collaborations with asylum seekers and local programmes were not sufficiently developed to be realised. At LCF, these were much better developed, though staff change meant that two key collaborations required significant reinvestment to reestablish and considerable negotiation to integrate them into the programme. The danger of neglecting relationships and not better integrating collaborators is that they appear tokenistic. We consider that this was avoided at LCF because of considerable investment of project members in redesigning collaborative involvements, and workload allocation to absorb the work. This investment was necessary and is to be lauded, but we observe that it did put pressure on individual project staff and created "go-betweens". Greater consideration of this work at a team level and increased collaboration may have eased this pressure. It is extremely important in community collaborations for project teams at all levels to understand completely the reason for the collaboration, and to have a vision of how (and if) it will integrate throughout the programme.

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Relationships must be reciprocal and where this reciprocity was clear, Making More Mischief achieved its biggest successes. By advocating an inclusive view of folk, while enabling autonomy for collaborating partners, Making More Mischief took risks in its own defining of what folk is. For the casual visitor this was less important than the vision laid out, and for expert visitors, this vision served to support and build progressive understandings of folk cultures. This kind of risk pays off. The generosity of collaborating partners cannot be taken for granted, however, and must be considered as long-term, even when dormant.

“Your heart’s in the right place, but....”

Do you know – beyond hitting targets – why you want to develop particular relationships over particular activities? Take care, going forward, over what methods you are looking to engage participants and contributors with. Co-production with communities needs to be carefully considered beyond box-ticking: who really benefits? Inclusion is not just diversity. If you are looking to engage economically or socially disadvantaged or minoritized groups, make sure you – and your whole team – understand why and that what you are offering is appropriate and useful and can be delivered in circumstances that may change. What measures do you have in place to aid team-building and understanding when you are all under pressure? Is incentivization possible or desirable? At Making More Mischief, giving ownership to collaborators of the project and providing reciprocal support generated results because of significant staff time and energy investment. Make sure that this is available: if it can’t be a part of salaried work, it must be budgeted.

How can relationships that are built during the project be maintained into the future? If they can’t be, what in-kind support or training can be offered so that they benefit over the longer term? Making More Mischief was able to offer curatorial support – an excellent exchange. It is appropriate that some relationships end but care must be taken in designing mutually beneficial exit points, and if community collaborators should seek future engagement, institutional memory of collaborations should be enmeshed, and staff handovers include some understanding of these relationships.[1]

Aims and objectives

Restate clearly the aims and objectives going forward. Does each member of the project team have the same aims and objectives? If not, does it matter? Where do your different aims and objectives create friction? Where are they smooth? If there is friction, can it be used to bring something interesting to light?

Community representation

Making Mischief engaged with its intended folk communities. This was achieved in part due to the embeddedness of project team members within those communities. This model works. In addition, activity leads, other personnel, and contacts generously engaged with their networks.

[1] The 2016 Creating Living Knowledge Report (Keri Facer and Bryony Enright, https://research-information.bris.ac.uk/files/75082783/FINAL_FINAL_CC_Creating_Living_Knowledge_Report.pdf) from UKRI’s Connected Communities programme and provides useful insight into the challenges and opportunities of co-creation.

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Dispute resolution and wellbeing

The project experienced discord regarding expectations around which elements of the project might carry forward into a very different institution – in particular, expectations around the inclusion of a segment on the practice of “blackface” that had been effective in Compton Verney, and was – crucially, in the view of this evaluation – included, and signed-off on – in the NLHF application, and had been seen as an integral element of the project by members of the curatorial team as well as members of the Advisory Board and EDI Committee. This caused stress on the project and project team members and became a potential wellbeing issue. While it is not the place of this evaluation to exhaustively explore this situation, we wish to highlight possibilities for positive communication and arbitration to avoid damage to relationships and morale, especially when this damage might undercut the generosity of external project collaborators or advisors and cause harm to internal project team members. What work can be done to prevent escalation in such situations? What mechanisms does the institution have for arbitration and dispute resolution and how can these be triggered earlier rather than later? Project teams should be aware of the possibility of such conflicts and identify pathways to dispute resolution early. Where issues of hierarchy hinder amicable resolution and make it difficult for project team members to trigger resolution pathways, there is a problem.

Whole exhibition approach

It is entirely correct that different project team members should oversee different elements of the project. However, the project team should have agreement and vision over how all elements of the exhibition fit together. Prioritising certain elements can mean that other elements look like add-ons. How can project team members step back and adapt their own visions to make sure that other packages from the wider project are properly integrated? In Making Mischief an excellent oral history programme provided depth and value to the project. While it was incorporated into the final costume exhibition in the main gallery, the balance of recorded voices played out loud was difficult in the space in a way that it had not been in Compton Verney (we note that in later surveys, complaints turned to compliments as volume levels were adjusted), and a headset installation felt somewhat tucked away. A moving film about Notting Hill Carnival was isolated from the rest of the Carnival exhibits and from the main film room and its positioning felt like an afterthought.

At LCF, the exhibition was dispersed. While some signage was in place, the space of the building did not make it easy to see or follow. Many visitors did not understand the number of rooms and installations, and the diversity of exhibition did not immediately relate for some visitors. A simple sheet of paper, or introductory panel, which mapped and outlined each installation would have gone a long way to holding the dispersed exhibition together.

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Commissions

Commissions and tendered briefs should be clearly set out before appointment by all parties. Any changes should be agreed upon in advance. Make sure parameters do not change too much – many commissioned parties are freelance and what may seem a small change can have a big effect. However, there is no need to include commissioned parties in excessive communication while setting up briefs: be clear about who needs to be included in decision making and when. When commissioning, be clear about the length of time it will take for commissioned parties to be paid. Institutional pay schedules can be intricate to set and up and lengthy in fruiting. Most freelancers ask for invoices to be paid within 30 days. If this is unlikely, let them know.

Would the commissioned party benefit from an invitation to be involved with other parts of the project, or to meet with other project partners and participants? They may not want to, or feel resourced to, but there is no harm in asking.

Co-creation

There is a balance to be struck between supporting and investing in community collaborators and partners, but we consider co-creation aspects of the project to have worked particularly well. The May Day Rave's activities and performances enchanted and entertained; the Somali Atelier was a generous invitation into a diasporic community; Pxssy Palace provided an off-site window into a dynamic club culture. The many participants and community members that contributed to Making Mischief made the project's liveliness apparent.

Accessibility

Accessibility is basic as well as complex. Large-print guides are necessary if plaques are placed low with relatively small typefaces. They should be printed on coloured paper suitable for dyslexic readers. Seating should be supplied at positions where a visitor may want to spend considerable time, such as at film or listening posts.

Reporting

Funded projects require a lot of reporting. Sometimes this needs to be done multiple times. The funder should be clear on what they need reported and from whom. Current NLHF reporting requirements mean project teams double up on evaluation work.

Marketing

Communicating activities has become difficult across the board. A very high proportion of visitors found their way to the exhibition through the social media presence of MoBF. Other collaborators were instrumental in bringing in visitors. UAL's web presence for the project was reasonable, and press good, but the decline of print media leaves a problem for communicating exhibitions and activities, despite the availability of more and more media. Some visitors found the exhibition through online newsletters such as [Ian Visits](#) and through the Olympic Park's event notifications. Crafters clearly use Eventbrite to find out what is on in London, and possibly elsewhere. Using project friends' networks – such as folk or costume society email lists – can also be effective.

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Inclusion

EDI specialist, Verna Myers, is the originator of the analogy, "diversity is being invited to the party; inclusion is being asked to dance." Making Mischief developed its approach over its iterations. While some visitors read the positioning of the Somali Atelier as isolated, we consider that the giving of space and autonomy enabled the group to develop their contribution to be a good example of "shaping the dance". The giving of this space was seen as "generous" by project collaborators and allowed them to "invite". The primary positioning of an increased representation of Carnival costumes with the heavily represented morris traditions also served to develop the inclusive understanding of folk that the project sought to invoke. Extending the film programme, and the addition of the Pxssy Palace installation, highlighting the collective's costuming practices, also served to build this understanding. On a subtler level, across the project, craft instructors invoked the universality of craft traditions while highlighting variety and difference, creating spaces for crafters to reflect on their own heritages with regards folk-making. In addition, talks and the project Symposium extended the variety of the dance by not conforming to academic structures in inviting folk practitioners to reflect in their own way on their own practices, while absolutely recognizing their expertise. We consider Making Mischief to have advanced inordinately its own presentation of, and a broader recognition of, an inclusive picture of folk practices.

We understand that the desire to address the issue of "blackface" at LCF as it had been at Compton Verney was prevented by institutional risk avoidance. We cannot pronounce on this omission but raise it here to acknowledge that omission also has an effect. We recognized the success and usefulness of this approach at Compton Verney: it gave practitioners an understanding of the issues and an argument to be made in circles that refused to recognize its offensiveness, especially appreciated by those with an existing discomfort with the practice; and also in casual visitors' relief at finding a robust rejection of the practices to be so widespread in folk circles. At Making More Mischief, a more-future forward approach worked in a different way to show a progressive face of folk. For the many visitors unfamiliar with the practice, its omission perhaps allowed a more positive engagement with traditions and practitioners who – for the most part – have left it behind. While we cannot say what effect its inclusion may have had, its omission may have allowed easier participation by marginalized communities, who had been invited to shape the dance without having to be confronted with its former movements. A success of the project was its inclusivity: ascribing a victimized or marginalized status to some groups may have altered the understanding of the project. We note that LCF's student body is heavily international, and East London's population is extremely diverse. However, these histories should not be swept under the carpet, and valid questions can be asked about how and why public institutions avoid complex or difficult discussions. We also note here that the issue was raised by some visitors, one as a "glaring omission".

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Institutions also limit inclusivity in other ways: large contracts mean that café outlets are closed despite heavy footfall and specific caterers must be used despite community desires. At LCF, the lack of female changing accommodations and availability of prayer rooms speak to an inability to accommodate certain groups. While it may not be possible to attend to the needs of all, the institution needs to attend to its exclusive practices if it is to champion its inclusive ones.

Platforming

Who is being boosted and why? Who could be being boosted and is not? Who is invited and why? Who is not being invited and why not? It is not possible to include everybody but if there are people or groups that would benefit who have not been asked, make sure you know why. What is your agency and activism?

Communication

Is everybody clear what is happening and when? If not, are there ways in which communication can be improved? People who may have a marginal role in relation to the project as a whole are reliant on being included in communication and having their requests responded to. Everyone is busy, but if communication lags, so does the project and so do outputs. Project team members with institutional roles do have a duty to respond to queries and requests, especially if their response is necessary to move on with project activity (eg. over volunteer recruitment, event hosting). Have project communications served commissioned parties, participants and collaborators well? Institutional Instagram posts can reach more people and different people to activity leads or speakers. If they are undertaking work for the project, ensure that you boost their posts, or post on their behalf. Make sure times and dates are correct.

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Making Mischief built, established and grew an expansive and progressive understanding of folk across its iterations, learning from and building on its first exhibition at Compton Verney. It responded to two wildly different locales, a rural gentile art gallery, and a city-based place “new” place, which could not be expected to have the same reaction to the same exhibition. The project team worked to create an exhibition that – while retaining the essence of folk performance and the joy that it creates – was responsive yet proactive, different, manifestly shifting its appeal across locales, while retaining broad appeal across diverse potential audiences. It brought a nuanced view of a diverse and inclusive folk world, while pulling no punches on the mutable, adaptable, community-oriented and community-built folk worlds that are achievable and that indeed flourish.

A greater representation from customs and traditions that originated outside a popular understanding of folk origins (rural Britain), and juxtaposing and integrating them with more widely recognized folk elements managed to embed without argument an expansive understanding. Making More Mischief at LCF built directly on work undertaken at Compton Verney, making the two-part project coherent, iterative, and constructive. While some elements of Compton Verney’s exhibition addressed head-on prejudicial elements of folklore now largely eschewed (and in doing so relieved and eased many visitors – see Interim Report), the shift away from historical understanding at LCF created a livelier progressive vision more fitting for its situation. Extensive and comprehensive activity programmes included demonstrations of costumes in action by performers.

Work with project partners outside a folk canon – Numbi Arts and Pxssy Palace – provided thoughtful content and collaborative world-building that were both open to visitors – an invitation to worlds and lives that are not always seen as folk worlds integrated and entwined with

British lifeways – and closed, allowing those collectives to engage in their own custom-based activities and transmissions. We consider this element of the project to have been the most challenging and most successful. It is clear that visitors felt enriched and expanded, and that participants have gained skills and understanding, as well as a relationship with a new institution.

In addition, the project’s adjunct yet integral activities –in particular, skills workshops, the oral history project, and talk and film programme– have deepened and thickened understanding of folk costume and customs in multiple ways:

- enabling skills development
- complexifying and opening up folk horizons to both casual and deeply-embedded audiences
- breaking down barriers between the institution and the people
- privileging the perspectives of those that do, and in doing so engendering a sense of pride and ownership
- taking understandings of folk far beyond the pale, male, stale vision still entertained by some
- Issuing invitations to join in to new audiences

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enthused by folk customs and traditions but without an invitation

- creating a lasting legacy in the recorded canon of histories taken, and in the costumes accessioned or otherwise protected and conserved by the project.

Making Mischief brought a startling history and a lively present to Compton Verney, and a vibrant vision of London to itself. It created an atmosphere in which many of the makers represented were enabled to feel part of the project, including the institutions themselves, which can be seen to have extensively benefited by such celebratory and positive visions of demotic performance, play and belief in place - at LCF, belief in place that is still becoming itself. It showcased flourishing and beguiling representations of other places and other customs, and bridged them with the widespread morris movement.

Making Mischief set out to show the flourishing, inclusive and diverse world of folk heritage - always adapting, always changing and becoming and including - through its tangible and tale-telling costumes. That these costumes are embodiments of common heritages, made of the prosaic and commonplace, as well as mysterious and magical windows that tell old and new stories simultaneously was laid out by the project team, with voice given to wearers and makers. In an era of increased interest in both craft and customs, the Making Mischief project ably and amply showed the importance of its content and the desire that attends it.

We consider the project to have delivered wholeheartedly on its aims and ambitions, to have opened new areas of exploration, and created new questions. The difficulties it faced are common to most projects that daringly deal with community-building and community-oriented heritages and its iterative success creates a body of useful work for subsequent projects to learn from. We find that it leaves all its participants and collaborators with substantial gains from participation and substantial good will and enjoyment of the project. We find that it leaves its visitors with an enhanced understanding of folk, costume and performance, and that it advances many folk communities' "missions" beyond localized and exclusive milieus - in line with their own desires. It speaks to a building desire to bond around tradition and custom that is not seen as exclusive, and shows explicitly the possibilities of doing so. Making Mischief made material a diverse yet coherent vision of a vibrant folk-world that allows for multitudes. It left visitors with joy, and wanting more, a strong and desirable sentiment for any project.