

## **Parallel Views Carnival Arts Museums and Galleries Month 2007 at Orleans House Gallery**



### **Introduction**

We used our London Museums Hub MGM grant to devise an MGM programme seeking to reach families from BME backgrounds living in London Borough of Richmond, adjacent boroughs and across London. We targeted this audience because we have become aware that, while many families from these groups access our Arts events, especially our Carnival (now in its 4<sup>th</sup> year) which takes place in the gallery grounds, we face challenges attracting these same families to our mainstream exhibitions and associated education programmes. We wished to encourage these families to begin to access our exhibitions and collections, as well as encouraging others to access our provision for the first time. As well as providing crucial funding to support this programme, the Hub MGM project proved extremely valuable in providing marketing expertise to support these aims as we do not have an in-house marketing team so welcome any opportunity to build our own capacity in this area with external assistance.

### **How we used the grant**

We used the grant to run and publicise a series of free artist-led family learning workshops providing a link between our carnival event (which takes place shortly after Museums and Galleries Month and already attracts a diverse audience) and *Parallel Views*, our forthcoming exhibition marking the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade. Before and during carnival, families took part in MGM-branded activities, working with carnival artist Carl Gabriel to create a 'mas'-inspired piece which has been installed as a key part of the exhibition. Participants were then invited back to a third creative workshop see their work *in situ* in the exhibition, providing an accessible introduction to our exhibitions programme.

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The free carnival workshops and the resulting installation provided a focus for marketing/press targeting audiences from diverse backgrounds, including those who regularly attend our arts events, encouraging these audiences to sample the MGM workshop programme. We hope that through this strategy we have introduced these audiences to our ongoing programme of exhibitions and education events.

We devised our marketing strategy with assistance from Andrew Willshire, Marketing Development Manager, Horniman Museum. This included:

- direct mail outs of flyers to families
- flyers and posters in community venues around our borough and in adjacent boroughs, particularly in venues likely to attract diverse audiences eg Wandsworth African Caribbean Community Library
- web listings
- photo call for local and regional press
- press release to local, regional and sector press including Ethnic Media Group and specialist carnival publications eg *Soca news*

### **Impact of project**

Our project was devised to have an immediate impact attracting more diverse audiences to our gallery education programme during Museums and Galleries Month 2007, but also a longer-term impact encouraging these audiences and others to begin to access our ongoing exhibitions programme. At this stage, only the more immediate outcomes can be explored.

#### Visitor numbers and demographics

For the introductory and final free family workshops, we limited numbers so that all the families would be able to spend time working directly with the artist in order to ensure a high quality experience for all the participants. A total of 51 people took part in these workshops.

At Twickenham Carnival, the unfinished installation was included in the carnival parade. Carl then ran a drop-in workshop giving visitors the opportunity to contribute directly to the decoration of the piece. An estimated 2000 people attended carnival, with 250 of these taking part in the drop-in workshop.

Since the piece has been installed in the exhibition (30<sup>th</sup> June 2007), 1406 people have come to visit it to date. We shall continue to monitor visits throughout the exhibition duration.

Of those participating in the two free family workshops, 34% (workshop 1) and 37.5% (workshop 2) were from non white-British backgrounds. Within the borough population, these groups make up only 12%, so this figure reflects our success at creating a family learning event which appealed to these audiences. We hope that the workshop will provide an effective 'stepping stone' for these participants to begin accessing our exhibitions programme.

30% (workshop 1) and 43% (workshop 2) of the adults participating in the activity were male. Fathers and male carers are a target group within our local family learning provision, and have been identified as a priority by Campaign for Learning. Currently only 8% of adults taking part in Family Learning programmes nationwide

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are male, so the number of fathers learning with their children during this workshop was well above average.

In terms of encouraging these more diverse audiences to discover our ongoing exhibitions and education programmes, 86% (workshop 1) and 100% (workshop 2) said that they intended to return to the gallery to see the final piece in the exhibition – an encouraging indicator in terms of the long-term outcomes we hope for.

Media coverage and website hits

We received 7 pieces of local press related to the project, four of which featured eye-catching photographs of Carl's work. We also received listings for the final workshop in a special Time Out supplement celebrating Children's Art Day. This is significantly more media coverage than we normally receive for MGM (usually 1 or 2 pieces per year). Press samples are attached to this document.

Our main website front page received 3314 hits April-June 2007.

Skills / Knowledge gained by museum staff

The marketing focus of the project was extremely helpful to us as we do not have an in-house marketing team so welcome any opportunity to build our own capacity in this area with external assistance. Working with the Horniman was particularly worthwhile as our two museums face some similar challenges (eg. distance from London Underground network) as well as similar opportunities (eg. museum set in extensive public grounds which non-visitors access). The fact that the Horniman have previous experience marketing carnival-themed events was also an asset.

Working with Andrew allowed us to benefit from his expertise and insights, and equally importantly provided an opportunity to step back and focus our attention on marketing, instead of treating it as a last-minute add-on to project planning. This was helpful in terms of the specific project, but will also prove beneficial longer term as we develop more sophisticated approaches to marketing and audience development.

The project also helped us develop our understanding by experimenting with a new, more integrated approach to programming, linking practical workshops, arts events and exhibition development to encourage audiences to move between these three areas of our work.