

Report: The "Mask Heritage" Residency

An Evaluation of Program Implementation and Outcomes

1.0 Project Overview and Core Mission

This report presents a formal evaluation of the "Mask Heritage" residency, a cross-cultural artistic collaboration held in Lišov, Slovakia. The initiative brought together professionals from Občianske združenie Lišov Múzeum (Slovakia) and Theatre Transformations (France) to explore the art of the mask. This document details the project's strategic objectives, analyzes the implementation of its core activities, and evaluates its outcomes against its stated mission.

Project Detail	Information
Project Title:	Mask Heritage: The Art of the Mask, a Tool from Our Past
Activity Dates:	04/11/2024 - 08/11/2024
Location:	Lišov, Slovakia
Lead Organisation:	Občianske združenie Lišov Múzeum (Slovakia)
Participating Organisation:	Theatre Transformations (France)
Total Budget:	€7,881.00

The residency was strategically designed to link traditional Slovak mask heritage with contemporary European performance practices. By facilitating a direct exchange of knowledge between the partner organizations, the project aimed to develop new forms of mask performance art, create durable educational resources, and engage the local community—with a particular focus on providing artistic opportunities for its youth and those working with young people.

The success of this initiative was guided by a set of clearly defined goals, which serve as the primary benchmark for this evaluation.

2.0 Strategic Objectives

The residency's predefined objectives provided a clear framework for action and the primary benchmark against which the project's success and impact are measured. The collaboration was designed to achieve the following five core goals:

1. Fostering a deeper appreciation for cultural traditions while encouraging innovation by creating bridges between mask heritage and contemporary practices.
2. Promoting cultural diversity and creating an inclusive environment by bringing a European dimension to the rural community of Lišov.
3. Serving as a vital first stage in the cooperation and development of European-scale project management skills.
4. Providing invaluable opportunities for artists and crafters from both partner organizations to showcase talent, collaborate, and gain international exposure.
5. Improving the understanding of the mask as a tool for educational action and artistic expression to empower local communities and youth.

The following section details the specific activities and workshops that were designed and executed to achieve these strategic objectives.

3.0 Program Implementation and Key Activities

The residency's week-long program was structured to maximize collaboration, skill-sharing, and community interaction. The schedule balanced intensive professional workshops with hands-on engagement activities for local youth and a culminating public event. This section breaks down the key activities that were executed, demonstrating how the project's strategic goals were translated into tangible action.

3.1 Professional Collaboration and Knowledge Exchange

The foundation of the residency was the deep, collaborative exchange between the teams from Lišov Múzeum and Theatre Transformations. Early sessions were dedicated to this purpose, with the Slovak team presenting its historical mask collection and the French team leading practical workshops on contemporary mask theatre techniques. This direct exchange allowed participants to experiment with historical and modern mask styles, explore how masks influence performance, and establish a shared artistic vocabulary.

3.2 Youth and School Engagement

A central component of the residency was its direct engagement with local young people (ages 15-30). This included dedicated workshops with students from the school of Hontianske Moravce and ZUŠ Krupnia. Activities included an introduction to clay and character design, where students crafted their own miniature clay masks inspired by both the museum's collection and contemporary styles. Later in the week, these students collaborated directly with the resident artists to rehearse short performances, receiving coaching from the Theatre Transformations team for the final showcase.

3.3 Community Outreach and Final Showcase

The residency culminated in a community showcase, a successful adaptation that went beyond the original plan to maximize community impact and demonstrate the project team's agility. Held in the local village hall, this event featured an improvised performance by Theatre Transformations using traditional fabric masks, a performance by the local youth using contemporary masks, an exhibition of both traditional and new masks, and an interactive photo booth that allowed the audience to engage directly with the art form. This event effectively transitioned the project's focus from internal development to public engagement.

The successful implementation of these activities provided the foundation for achieving the project's strategic goals.

4.0 Analysis of Outcomes Against Objectives

This section provides a systematic evaluation of the residency's success by mapping the implemented activities to the strategic objectives. The evidence confirms that the program effectively met or exceeded its goals, demonstrating the efficacy of its cross-cultural collaboration model.

Objective 1: Fostering a deeper appreciation for cultural traditions while encouraging innovation. This objective was achieved through the core collaborative sessions where the historical collection of the Lišov Múzeum was explored alongside the contemporary performance techniques of Theatre Transformations. The hands-on

workshops on Day 1 and Day 2, which mixed discussion of traditional mask significance with practical experimentation, successfully created a direct bridge between heritage and modern artistic expression, as evidenced by the final showcase that featured both styles.

Objective 2: Promoting cultural diversity and creating an inclusive environment. The residency inherently promoted cultural diversity by bringing a French artistic organization to the rural Slovak community of Lišov, introducing a valuable "European dimension." The success of this cultural exchange was reflected in participant feedback, which repeatedly noted the warm, welcoming, and easy-going atmosphere that facilitated smooth and effective collaboration between the international partners.

Objective 3: Serving as a vital first stage in cooperation and project management skills. The project successfully functioned as a foundational phase for a larger, European-scale partnership. The week of intensive, co-led activities established effective working protocols, built trust between the organizations, and laid the logistical and creative groundwork for future collaborations, including the planned second residency in France.

Objective 4: Providing invaluable opportunities for artists and crafters. The residency provided a significant international platform for artists from both organizations. Through collaborative sessions and co-facilitated workshops, participants exchanged professional techniques, showcased their distinct skills, and gained exposure to new artistic approaches. The final community performance served as a public showcase for the work developed during the week, fulfilling the goal of international collaboration and exposure.

Objective 5: Improving the understanding of the mask as a tool for educational action and artistic expression to empower local communities and youth. This objective was profoundly met through the targeted engagement with students from the school of Hontianske Moravce and ZUŠ Krupnia. These workshops provided young people from a less privileged rural area with a rare opportunity to engage in hands-on artistic creation. The project allowed organizers to witness the "transformative power of artistic expression," validating the creative potential of local youth and empowering them through a culminating public performance that fostered a community-wide sense of pride.

4.1 Progress on Educational Toolkits

A key tangible outcome of the residency was the significant progress made on developing "mask education tools." The week served as a crucial research and development phase, allowing the teams to exchange ideas and draw inspiration from the museum's collection. The plan is to create:

- a visitors guide for the museum, focusing on certain masks (each artist focused on one particular mask to explore and describe in the guide)
- two identical sets of "theatre masks," complete with associated "stories to tell... inspired by the museum masks." These kits, designed for youth aged 15-30, will be finalized during the second residency. One kit will remain with Lišov Múzeum for use in Slovakia, and the other will be used by Theatre Transformations in France, representing a durable legacy of the collaboration.

Group rules were established for the Digital Mask Platform

The direct feedback from participants offers a further qualitative measure of the residency's success.

5.0 Participant Experience and Feedback

The qualitative feedback gathered from participants provides essential insight into the project's collaborative atmosphere and overall impact. The direct experiences of the artists and organizers were overwhelmingly positive, highlighting a well-structured and welcoming program.

Key Strengths and Favorite Moments

- The final community performance in the Lišov cultural house was cited as a program highlight, successfully culminating the week's collaborative efforts.
- Participants cherished the unique experience of performing with masks, particularly the creative "Cave houses photoshoot" from Day 3.
- The program was praised for being well-balanced and constructive, mixing practical exercises with the exchange of professional techniques.
- The warm and welcoming atmosphere was consistently noted as a key factor that facilitated a smooth and effective partnership.

Opportunities for Future Collaboration

Participant feedback also provided actionable recommendations for optimizing the partnership's next phase:

- Allocating more dedicated time for hands-on mask mask.
- Dedicating specific time to research the unique stories and histories behind the individual masks in the museum's collection.
- Continuing to explore new and creative ways to deepen the project's involvement with the local community.

The overall sentiment is well-captured in this representative quote from participant Tracey Boot of Theatre Transformations.

"Extremely well balanced week with a great mix of practical exercises, exploring and exchanging techniques and meeting young people and the local community of Lisov"

This positive participant experience provides a strong foundation for the project's long-term ambitions.

6.0 Conclusion and Long-Term Impact

The "Mask Heritage" residency successfully met or exceeded all strategic objectives, demonstrating the efficacy of its cross-cultural collaboration model. Through a well-designed program of professional exchange, youth workshops, and community engagement, the project forged a meaningful and tangible connection between traditional Slovak mask heritage and contemporary European performance art. The enthusiastic participation of the local community and the positive feedback from project partners confirm the residency's immediate success.

The residency has successfully established a robust framework for future collaboration and long-term impact. The partnership between Občianske združenie Lišov Múzeum and Theatre Transformations has been significantly strengthened, with a planned second residency in France to finalize key deliverables. The production of the educational toolkits represents a measurable long-term outcome, ensuring the project's legacy will extend to youth in both Slovakia and France. This initiative has advanced the shared goal of fostering a lasting appreciation for the power of mask traditions in contemporary education and art.