

Report: "Mask, Arts & Crafts" Residency 3 – Lišov, Slovakia 2025

1.0 Executive Overview

The "Mask, Arts & Crafts" residency, held in Lišov, Slovakia from 31 August to 7 September 2025, proved to be a highly successful cultural initiative that demonstrably strengthened community bonds through collaborative public art. The project's central theme explored the use of masks and yarn bombing as mediums for fostering creative dialogue. Executed through a strategic partnership between the lead organization, Občianske združenie Lišov Múzeum, and the participating organization, Theatre Transformations, the residency culminated in a large-scale public celebration, "The Bag Ladies, yarn bombing community event." This report provides a formal documentation of the project's framework, a detailed analysis of its execution, and a comprehensive assessment of its outcomes and impact based on participant feedback.

2.0 Project Framework and Objectives

A clearly defined project framework is fundamental to the successful execution and evaluation of any cultural initiative. By establishing precise objectives, roles, and resources from the outset, the "Mask, Arts & Crafts" residency created a solid foundation for its activities. This strategic planning was essential for measuring the project's success and understanding its true impact on the artists, participants, and the broader community of Lišov.

2.1 Project Vitals

The core logistical and administrative details of the residency are summarized below.

Category	Details
Project Title	Residency «Mask, Arts & Crafts»
Key Event	"The Bag Ladies, yarn bombing community event"
Dates	31 August – 7 September 2025
Location	Lišov, Slovakia
Lead Organization	Občianske združenie Lišov Múzeum
Participating Organization	Theatre Transformations
Funding Program	Erasmus+
Total Budget	€12,369.00
Staffing	8 total (five artists from Theatre Transformations, three staff from Lisov)

2.2 Core Concept and Methodology

The central concept of the residency was to investigate how collective creation can serve as a powerful tool for social cohesion. The project utilized the traditional art of the mask and the contemporary public art form of yarn bombing to explore how these mediums could strengthen community bonds. This methodology was designed to foster a sense of

unity and togetherness, providing participants with a platform for shared creative expression and public dialogue.

2.3 Strategic Objectives

The project was guided by two primary strategic objectives designed to maximize its social and cultural impact:

- 1. Bridging Divides:** To forge stronger bonds between individuals from different backgrounds, bridging intercultural, intergenerational, and social divides through the shared experience of collaborative art creation.
- 2. International Cooperation:** To serve as a powerful reminder of the role art and community can play in bringing people together for a common cause, thereby supporting international relations and development cooperation.

2.4 Target Audience and Beneficiaries

The residency was designed to be a highly inclusive initiative. The target group welcomed people of all ages, backgrounds, and interests, explicitly including young children, seniors, local artists, and families.

The primary beneficiaries extended beyond the direct participants to encompass the entire community of Lišov and visiting tourists. These groups benefited from the vibrant public art installations that transformed the local area and the positive atmosphere of connection and celebration generated by the project's activities. This clearly defined framework, with its emphasis on inclusivity and broad community benefit, directly guided the development of a program designed for maximum participation and public engagement.

3.0 Residency Program and Key Activities

The week-long residency was carefully structured to build momentum and deepen engagement over time. The program began with foundational preparation and skill-building workshops, transitioned into a phase of intensive artistic exchange and direct community outreach, and culminated in a final public event that synthesized the week's collaborative efforts.

3.1 Daily Program Schedule Summary

The residency followed a dynamic daily schedule that balanced structured activities with communal living, with participants staying at the Church House and sharing meals together:

- **31 August (Sunday):** Arrival of participants in Lišov, orientation at the museum, and a group welcome dinner at the Púček family farm.
- **1 September (Monday):** Official project launch, gathering and sorting of recycled materials, and brainstorming sessions on themes and colour schemes.
- **2 September (Tuesday):** A hands-on workshop with artist Adriana focused on the creative use of recycled materials and mask exploration. Bag Ladies rehearsals
- **3 September (Wednesday):** A presentation of the Lišov Múzeum, followed by a mask and craft workshop for tourists led by artists Tracey and Adriana. Bag Ladies rehearsals.
- **4 September (Thursday):** A collaborative making workshop with local students and a creative meeting with renowned Slovak artist Fero Lipták. Bag Ladies rehearsals.
- **5 September (Friday):** Public engagement activities, including artists working from stools in public spaces, and the beginning of the final event installation at Stodola Lišov. Bag Ladies rehearsals
- **6 September (Saturday):** The main community event day, "The Bag Ladies," featuring workshops, performances, and a shared celebration dinner at the farm.
- **7 September (Sunday):** Farewell breakfast and departure of participants.

3.2 Analysis of Core Activity Streams

Beyond the daily schedule, the residency's program can be understood through three interconnected thematic streams that defined its work.

3.2.1 Artistic Preparation and Creation

This stream comprised the foundational creative work of the residency. Activities included gathering and sorting recycled materials, brainstorming themes and colour schemes, and preparing fabric strips for yarn bombing. Artist-led workshops were central to this process. Sessions led by Adriana and Tracey focused on practical skills such as the inventive use of recycled materials, weaving, knitting, braiding, and mask making, providing participants with the necessary techniques to contribute to the collective artworks.

3.2.2 Cultural and Artistic Exchange

Moments of professional collaboration and artistic exchange were critical to the residency's success. A significant highlight was the creative meeting with Fero Lipták, a multifaceted Slovak artist, filmmaker, illustrator, and founder of the independent theatre company TEATRO TATRO. This interaction was cited by participants as a "very joyful" and inspirational highlight that "created a strong bond," providing a crucial moment of cross-cultural artistic dialogue. Furthermore, open rehearsals of "The Bag Ladies" performance fostered a "critical exchange" with local young people. This dialogue directly influenced the creative output, leading to the development of four new solo performances and an innovative extra scene that incorporated a local resident's car.

3.2.3 Community Engagement and Outreach

This stream focused on activities designed to involve the wider community directly in the artistic process. Workshops were held specifically for local students and tourists, offering hands-on creative experiences. A key outreach strategy involved the artists working on their crafts from stools placed in public spaces. This made the creative process visible and accessible, sparking curiosity and inviting informal interaction with residents and visitors. The cumulative energy from these artistic, cultural, and community-focused activities provided the critical momentum for the residency's capstone event.

4.0 Culminating Event: "The Bag Ladies" Community Day

The main event, held on Saturday, 6 September at Stodola Lišov, served as the synthesis of the entire week's work. (Bag Ladies rehearsals took place throughout the week inside and outside of the Museum). It was designed as a dynamic platform to showcase the collaborative public art, directly engage the broader community, and celebrate the new and strengthened bonds forged throughout the residency.

4.1 Event Structure and Components

The community day was a multifaceted celebration composed of several key elements:

- **Final installation of artwork and dining areas** by a collaborative team of artists, local youth, and residents of all ages.
- **A public workshop** where community members could learn techniques directly from the participating artists.
- **Shared community cooking**, culminating in a celebratory dinner of goulash that encouraged social interaction.
- **A formal mask presentation and photo documentation session** to archive the creative work.
- **An evening performance and live art interaction featuring "The Bag Ladies,"** which brought together physical comedy, mime, and audience engagement.

4.2 Analysis of Impact and Reception

The event was highly successful in achieving its intended impact. The collaborative installations resulted in a vibrant and colourful transformation of the local area, which was documented to have sparked joy and curiosity among both residents and tourists.

Participant feedback highlighted the positive reception of the performance, noting that the audience was "attentive and laughed." The combination of shared food, collaborative art, and engaging performance successfully fostered a "friendly and festive atmosphere," creating a palpable sense of unity and connection that strengthened ties between residents and the international artist team. The observable success of this culminating event was corroborated by extensive qualitative feedback, which provides a deeper understanding of the project's impact on its participants.

5.0 Participant Feedback and Impact Assessment

The true measure of the residency's success lies not just in its artistic output but in the experiences of its participants. This section synthesizes qualitative feedback gathered through formal evaluation forms to assess the project's impact against its original objectives.

5.1 Synthesis of Qualitative Feedback

Analysis of participant feedback reveals overwhelmingly positive responses across several key themes:

- **Program Design and Favorite Moments:** Participants expressed high satisfaction with the week's program design. Favorite moments frequently cited included the Saturday performance (particularly the scene with the car), the inspirational meeting with artist Fero Lipták, the discovery of Lišov, and the opportunity to learn new crafting techniques like hand knitting.
- **Effectiveness of Masked Performance:** The use of non-verbal, full-faced female characters was identified as a highly effective method for communication. One participant noted that this physical approach was a "great tool for exchanging," successfully crossing language barriers. Another praised the "universal language of mime and physical theatre," confirming its ability to connect with a diverse, multilingual audience.
- **Community Connection:** The residency was successful in building relationships. Feedback highlighted that the project forged new connections and strengthened existing bonds, with one local participant noting they "keep having calls and congratulations" from community members after the event. The welcoming and generous atmosphere in the village was a recurring theme.
- **Target Audience Reach:** The event successfully engaged its intended broad audience. Participants confirmed the presence of "young people and seniors," "families," and "all generations," indicating that the program was accessible and appealing to a diverse cross-section of the community.

5.2 Evaluation of Stated Objectives

The project's performance can be directly measured against its strategic objectives using evidence from participant experiences.

Strategic Objective	Evidence of Achievement
Bridging Divides	Participant feedback confirms the event fostered a "sense of unity and togetherness." The shared dinner and collaborative art-making created a "friendly and festive atmosphere," strengthening ties between residents, artists, and different generations. The use of non-verbal theatre was cited as a "valuable help for connecting people."

International Cooperation	The project successfully brought together teams from Slovakia and France, enriched by artistic exchanges with local artist Fero Lipták. Participants reported being "plongées dans la culture et les pratiques slovaques" (immersed in Slovak culture and practices), demonstrating a successful cross-cultural experience.
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The detailed feedback confirms that the residency effectively met its foundational goals, creating a tangible and positive impact on both individual participants and the community at large.

6.0 Conclusion and Strategic Recommendations

In summary, the "Mask, Arts & Crafts" residency was a highly successful initiative. It effectively met its artistic and community-building objectives through a well-structured program, meaningful artistic exchange, and deep community engagement. The successful execution of the culminating public event and the overwhelmingly positive participant feedback serve as clear evidence of the project's significant impact in strengthening community bonds and fostering cross-cultural understanding in Lišov.

6.1 Summary of Key Achievements

The residency's most significant successes can be distilled into three key areas:

- **Successfully strengthened community bonds** in Lišov through collaborative public art and a culminating event that engaged a multi-generational audience.
- **Effectively utilized non-verbal masked performance to overcome language barriers and foster cross-cultural connection** between international artists and the local community.
- **Facilitated meaningful artistic exchange**, including a valuable collaboration with local artist Fero Lipták and the development of new performance pieces inspired by the local context.

6.2 Recommendations for Future Initiatives

Based on direct suggestions provided in participant feedback forms, the following actionable recommendations are proposed for future projects:

1. **Enhance Promotion:** Implement broader promotion of project activities across European Union countries and increase the use of social media advertisements to expand audience reach and participation.
2. **Deepen Public Involvement:** Explore methods to involve the public more directly and consistently in the performance and creation processes. This could include pre-planned, daily collective crafting sessions for local residents to increase ownership and participation.
3. **Expand Collaborations:** Continue to build on the successful partnership model and actively seek out new artistic partners to further enrich the creative diversity and impact of future initiatives.
4. **Allocate More Time:** Consider extending the duration of future residencies. A longer timeframe would allow for more in-depth exchange of artistic techniques and foster even deeper, more sustained community integration.