

Truck Art

Truck Art was an ambitious project for Luton Culture to work with local young people from across Luton's diverse communities, to transform a Vauxhall Bedford truck into the style of decorated trucks in Pakistan. The project celebrated the links between Luton and Pakistan: Bedford trucks manufactured in Luton in the 1950s are still used in Pakistan.

Objectives:

- To engage young people in their cultural heritage and in the heritage of Luton through a programme of activities, inspirational object engagement and exchange opportunities.
- To build partnership with international organisation
- To strengthen cross-cultural sector (Arts, Libraries & Museums) working within Luton Culture
- To develop a collection that is relevant to a diverse audience

The project included two international exchanges between Haider Ali, a Pakistani truck artist and Rory Coxhill, a British Gypsy artisan; with the aim to inspire and challenge contemporary craft culture by facilitating opportunities for artistic professional development. Rory Coxhill specialises in painting traditional Romany wagons and spent eight weeks in Pakistan on an apprenticeship, learning the craft of truck art with Haider Ali. Haider Ali is a truck artist based in Karachi, who was taught by his father from the age of eight. Haider's work is much sought after in Pakistan and his work gained international recognition when he painted a truck for the Smithsonian Museums, Washington D.C., in 2002.

Alongside the artist exchange programme, six members of the museum's youth team travelled to Pakistan, visiting Lahore and Karachi, to experience first hand the country's rich culture and heritage. The trip included visits to truck yards, workshops at the National College of Art, tours of heritage sites and collecting of objects to bring back to complement the museum's existing folk art collection.

Both artists and the museum's youth team worked closely together, to transform the Bedford truck into a traditional Pakistan folk art vehicle. In addition to developing artistic skills, the young people participated in a programme of training, workshops and visit to museums, to gain an understanding of museums, collections and exhibition curation.

The truck featured in a major exhibition at Stockwood Discovery Centre and embarked on an outreach tour of local festivals and events, sharing the learning and inspiration from the project across the town.

"I think the Truck Art project has gone beyond what it initially set out to do, and I can say that it has helped develop myself at a personal level and I have made new friends where ever the project has taken me. I have learnt a lot about a different culture which has helped me understand new things about my own culture, and I share my experience about the project with people I meet where ever I go, and so I think in some ways the project continues to live on."

Chris McCarthy, Re-Created member (Luton Museum's youth forum)