**Acts of Wanton Wonder from the Land of Green Ginger**

Communities across Hull are being surprised and delighted by a series of Acts of Wonder Wonder from the Land of Green Ginger. Hull City of Culture Executive Producer Katy Fuller talks about this city-wide project and how it’s come to fruition.

*6 artists, 6 Acts of Wanton Wonder: all varying in aesthetic, delivery, duration and methods of engagement.*

*Land of Green Ginger started as a way of reaching audiences who are traditionally harder to engage in the arts. We wanted to produce work as high quality as anything that would be programmed in the city centre during the City of Culture year, but delivered out in communities and neighbourhoods.*

*The name itself is taken from a Hull street, famously ambiguous in its history. As a starting point for the project it seemed a logical springboard; not only is Land of Green Ginger open to interpretation, but it’s well-known throughout Hull and carries an air of mystery which fuels the sensibilities of magic and wonder we wanted to thread throughout the story.*

*The project made its public debut with the breaking news that a huge cache of crates, all stamped with the words ‘To Hull; From Land of Green Ginger’ had been discovered in a vault underneath the city. Bringing in various cultural partners to verify this – local media and Hull City Council – our fictional investigative organisation, The Green Ginger Fellowship, was called in to investigate.*

*Because Land of Green Ginger is such a large-scale durational project - taking place over eight months - we needed to find a thread that would hold the narrative together. The Green Ginger Fellowship, with its social media pages and website, was the perfect vehicle for this. Virtual interaction allows the audience to absorb themselves into the narrative world, engaging with the members of the Fellowship and their investigations on the Acts of Wanton Wonder appearing through the city.*

*The pilot projects of 2016 gave a good indication of how engagement could be more targeted, and artists Periplum returned this year to pick up communication with a number of community members they’d previously worked with.*

*Artists Claire Rafterty and Damian Wright spent time in the Preston Road area of Hull, talking to residents about their childhood memories and the uniqueness of their neighbourhood. A recurring theme was that of the 7 Alleys, the myth surrounding a network of six alleys with a seventh that opens at will to reveal all manner of wondrous phenomena.*

*Community engagement with this project was very much on the ground. A carriage pulled by two black horses travelled around East Hull, handing out invites to people who had engaged with the project in its pilot project stage. The artists periodically stopped the carriage, talking to people who had come out of their houses to watch. The aim was to build excitement and anticipation, the sense that something very special was coming to their area and they needed to be part of it.*

*Taking the idea of the 7 Alleys, Periplum re-invented the myth, weaving social history and fictional characters together to create an after-dark performance that allowed the audience to journey through the stories to one last challenge – travelling through the seventh alley itself.*

*We were always very careful to invest fully in the narrative, at no point revealing it was a City of Culture project. We wanted to bring a sense of other-worldliness to the neighbourhood, inviting the community to invest in a reawakening of a story many of them have been familiar with since childhood.*

*By way of comparison, Joshua’s Sofaer’s The Gold Nose of Green Ginger, was a very different piece. Where 7 Alleys spanned four performances, this was a durational commission with fixed opening hours, inviting members of the local Bransholme community to come and visit The Gold Nose on display in the local shopping centre.*

*The heralding of this project involved The Green Ginger Fellowship re-discovering a previously lost treasure - The Gold Nose of Green Ginger. By weaving the fictional object into the mythology of the city, it has become wholly real, something tangible that people could visit alongside shopping or having a cup of tea.*

*The Gold Nose of Green Ginger space was designed with both aesthetics and function in mind, displaying The Gold Nose prominently as a lost treasure returned home, but also allowing the public time and space to engage with The Gold Nose Guardian and her two assistants. By the project’s close, around 30,000 people had visited The Gold Nose and the space boasted in the region of 70 regular visitors who came most days of the week to engage in various scheduled activities, or simply for a chat.*

*The engagement here was multi-layered; Joshua had also run a pilot project with a pop-up nose shop in the same shopping centre in 2016. Part of this process involved the opportunity for willing participants to have a cast of their nose made, so these were displayed prominently on the lintel of the new space, inviting people to come and ‘spot’ their nose.*

*When The Green Ginger Fellowship discovered The Gold Nose of Green Ginger, they announced it not as a mystery, but something they’d already heard about in stories through the years. Creating this already verified history gave the public a green light to already believe, galvanising their pride in welcoming it back to the area for display while simultaneously creating a new thread of history for the future.*

*The aim of Land of Green Ginger has always been to delight and bring wonder to communities who may not engage with the arts for a multitude of reasons. Being a flagship project of the Hull 2017 calendar with generous funding from Spirit of 2012, its luxury lies within high production values, and innovative artists with the desire to engage and tell stories. The audience can, of course, treat it as a City of Culture project, but we made an unequivocal decision to lead with the fictional narrative, bringing a playfulness to the project that encourages engagement at all levels.*

*If the audience are able to suspend belief and embrace wonder and magic, then the Land of Green Ginger will capture them in beautiful stories inhabited by the most extraordinary people.*