

Illuminating York: Audience Research Pilot Project

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Introduction

The Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past (henceforth IPUP) conducted audience research during the Illuminating York 2009 festival on the evening of the 30th October 2009 as part of wider project to assess public perceptions of cultural heritage in York. Interviews were conducted on the largest site of the event, the Museums Gardens in the city centre of York. The research is also part of a larger IPUP project on ‘Heritage Interactions’, which explores the impact on audiences of contemporary art interventions in heritage spaces. Contemporary art intervention refers to installations and site-specific artwork by contemporary artists, including sound and light installation, which are presented to the public in a heritage space.

Background

Illuminating York is an annual arts night festival organised by the City of York Council with support from the Arts Council (for more information, see WEBSITE). The event enables visitors to discover the city of York and its buildings in colourful new light, as art works are projected onto and across various locations in York. Previous festivals have included projections of artworks on the York Minster, St Mary’s Abbey and the Yorkshire Museum. In 2009, the Illuminating York festival presented three different art projects between the 23rd October and the 1st November:

- Gaianova and OMA International at the Multangular Tower in the Museum Gardens.

Using ‘Tagtool’ technology, an interactive drawing board which enables users to project their drawings onto building surfaces, this event saw professional artists and members of the

public using the Multangular Tower as a large historic canvas onto which they projected doodles, words and pictures.

- *5Circles* by KMA and Pilot Theatre at St. Sampson's Square.

5Circles employed web technology such as streaming, chat and feedback to create a artwork of colours and sound, projected onto the street of York in St. Sampson's Square, which allowed passers to interact with the technology to become both performers and audience to their collective work.

- *Vespertine* by Bright White at the King's Manor courtyard.

Using digitally produced sound and video installations, *Vespertine* projected images and sounds of nocturnal wildlife across the historic fabric of the King's Manor courtyard.

In addition to these light and sound installations, the Illuminating York festival provided an opportunity for visitors to visit many of York's cultural and historical during special late evening openings.

Objectives

The aim of this research was to gain an insight on the impact of light and sound art interventions in heritage setting in terms of audience engagement with cultural heritage and historic spaces.

The first objective of this research was to establish public perceptions and uses of the Museum Gardens and explore the public value of its heritage buildings (see also IPUP audience reports on the Museum Gardens).

The second objective of this research was to examine how and to what extent the sound and light art interventions impacted on public perceptions of cultural heritage buildings. Finally, the audience research sought to establish people's reasons for visiting the event and examine the potential of contemporary art and music events as a means for attracting new audiences and encouraging repeat visits to historical sites in York.

Methodology

For the purposes of this pilot audience research, 160 face-to-face interviews were conducted in the Museum Gardens on the 30th of October 2009, on the penultimate night of the festival. The four researchers worked in pairs in order to interview couples and groups and gain a maximum of single person interviews. This technique enabled single researchers to avoid interviewing multiple individuals at the same time, thus reducing the possibility of respondents being influenced by the answers of their peers, and minimizing the number of monosyllabic responses when respondents merely agreed with their peers. One pair of researchers was posted at the entrance to the Museum Gardens on INSERT STREET. Researchers targeted individuals who appeared to be leaving the event through these gates.

The second group of respondents was posted near the Yorkshire Museum on the pathway to the King's Manor so as to intercept individuals who would have previously visited the *Vespertine* installation at the King's Manor courtyard. The audience survey attempted, as much as possible, to engage people from as wide a background as possible. Focus was however placed on individuals above 16 years old (adults).

The open-ended questionnaires, retaining the anonymity of the respective respondents, were digitally recorded to allow for careful transcription. The first part of the interviews consisted of specific questions addressing the values, meanings and public perceptions of the Museum Gardens and its historic building, while the main part of the questionnaire explored the impact of contemporary art installations on these public perceptions of cultural heritage (see Appendix 1). Question related to the whether such events would encourage repeat visits were also included. In addition, general background information on the respondents was also collected in order to assist in the identification of any patterns with the regard the responses. Both the qualitative and quantitative (demographic) data gathered from the interviews have been coded in line with the specific objectives of the audience research project and have been analysed with the use of Microsoft Excel.

All of the transcribed interviews are included in a separate document (see Appendix 2), which also includes the background information for all individual respondents. Every interview is labelled according to the relevant audio file and the initials of the person conducting the interview (e.g. NM 01 or GA 17a and 17b respectively).

Potential for fulfilling long term objectives

The audience research conducted during the Illuminating York festival can serve in the future as the basis for a more extensive project utilising qualitative methodologies to provide evidence of the value of contemporary art for public engagement with cultural heritage. The research can point to new ways of interpreting and representing heritage to a wider audience.

Furthermore, the audience research can form part of a larger research project to better understand public perceptions and public uses of the Museum Gardens, which can contribute to new presentations of the site to the public.

The employment of qualitative research methodologies can potentially contribute to the identification of visitor needs and expectations as well as to engage with a wider audience of users and non-users. Indeed, such interventions can serve to introduce contemporary art to an audience that primarily visits historic sites for their heritage value, whilst at the same time encouraging a contemporary art audience to visit historic and heritage sites.

1. Audience Survey Demographic

1.1 Gender distribution

In this sample of 160 face-to-face interviews, just over half of respondents, 55% were women, and 45% were men (Fig.1)

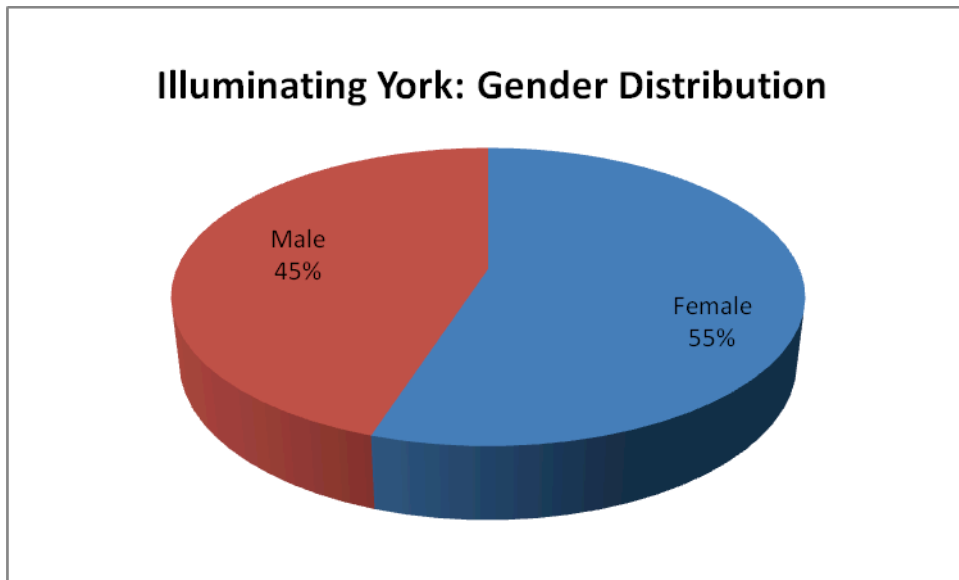


Figure 1: Gender distribution of respondents (total sample 160 interviews)

1.2 Age distribution

Figure 2 reveals that the majority of respondents were from the age group 16-24 year old (23%). Other respondents were rather evenly distributed across the age groups 25-34 and 34-44, 18% and 19% respectively; the age group 45-54 represented 16% of the total sample, while the age group 55-64 accounted for 13% of respondents. The two smaller groups were over 65s, 8% and Under 16s, 3%.

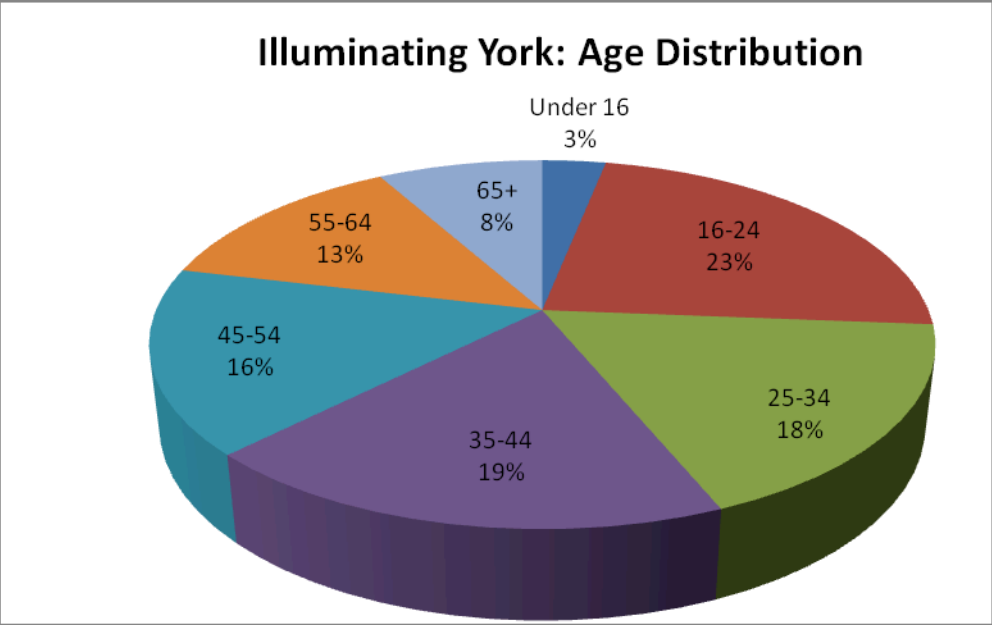


Figure 2: Age distribution of respondents (total sample 160 interviews)

1.3 Origin of respondents

The event attracted a high number of York resident, and this group accounted for 61% of total sample (Fig. 3). The second largest audience group was evenly distributed between Yorkshire residents, 17% of total sample, and UK visitors, 18%. Overseas visitors accounted for the smallest audience group, 3% of the total sample.

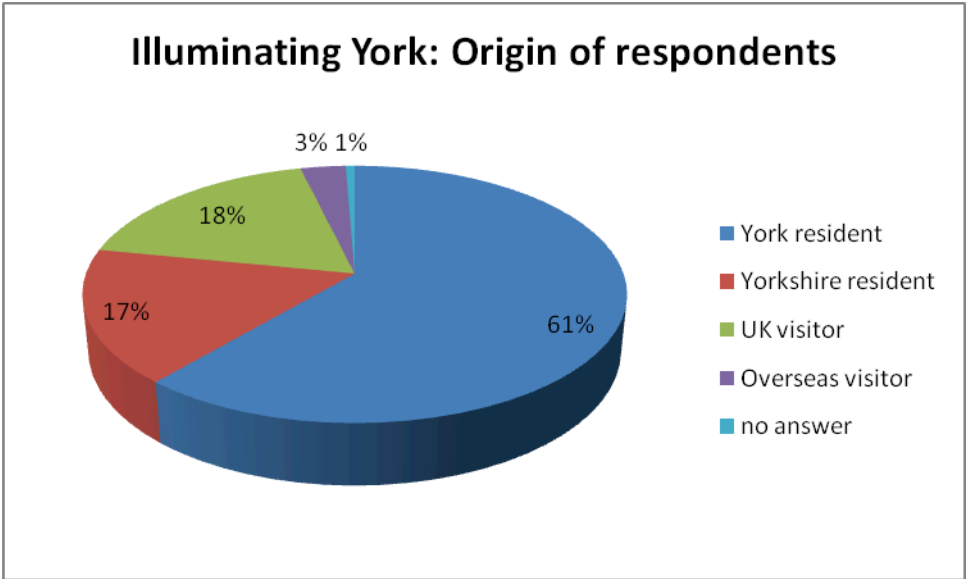


Figure 3: Origin of respondents (total sample 160 interviews)

1.4 Educational background of respondents

The majority of respondents had a background in tertiary education, with 31% having a Postgraduate level qualification, and 24% an Undergraduate level qualification (Fig. 4). The third most frequent level of education was A Level/High School level qualifications, accounting for 18% of the total audience sample. GCSE/Secondary levels accounted for 9% of the sample, while HNC/Technical Qualifications and Trade Qualifications accounted for 8% and 7% of the total sample respectively. Two percent of respondents stated they had no formal qualifications and two respondents declined to provide a response for this question.

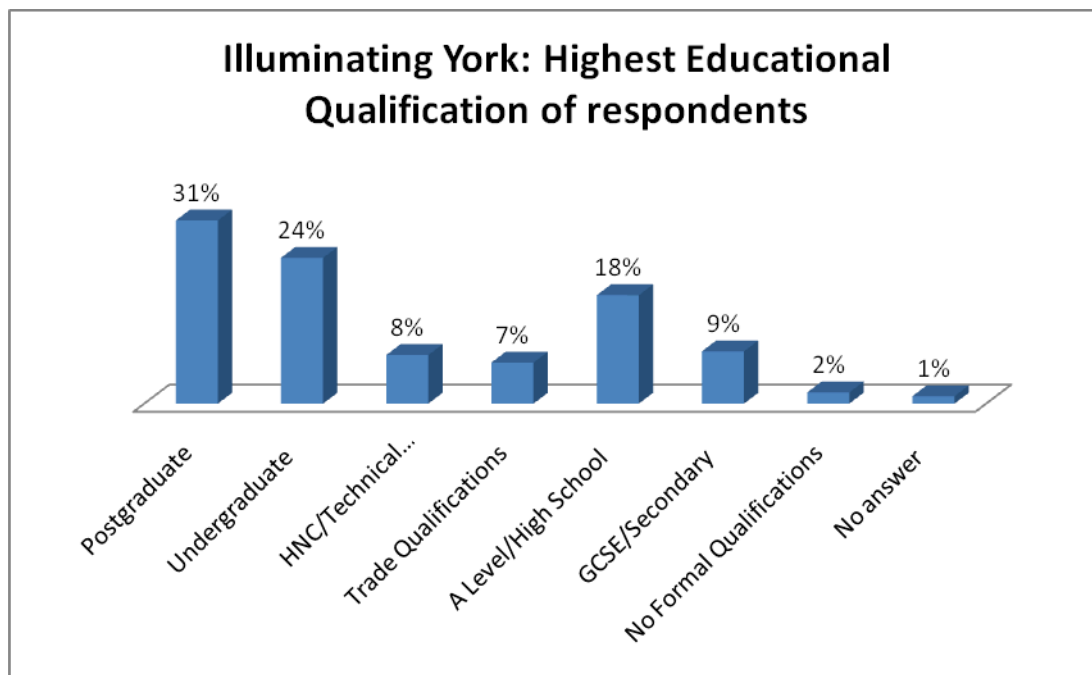


Figure 4: Highest Educational Qualification of respondents (total sample of 160 interviews)

1.5 Occupation of main income earner

The overwhelming majority of respondents stated that the main income earner in their household held a managerial or professional position – 31% with a higher managerial or professional occupation and just over 30% with a lower managerial or professional occupation (Fig. 5).

The two second largest groups were made up of respondents whose household's highest income earner held an intermediate occupation (10%), or were retired (10%). Semi-routine occupations accounted for 9% of the sample, lower supervisory and technical occupation 4%, students 3%, while small employers and routine occupations both accounted for 2% of the total sample.

Occupational category of main income earner	Frequency	Percentage
Higher managerial and professional occupations	50	31%
Lower managerial and professional occupations	49	30.6%
Intermediate occupations	16	10%
Small employers and own account workers	3	2%
Lower supervisory and technical occupations	7	4%
Semi-routine occupations	9	6%
Routine occupations	3	2%
Unemployed (including retired)	16	10%
Students	5	3%
no answer	2	1%

Figure 5: Occupational Category of Main Income Earner (total sample 160 interviews)

1. 5 Ethnicity

The sample of 160 respondents represents almost exclusively people from the United Kingdom, with 83% identifying their ethnicity as White British, English, or European British, and three respondents describing themselves as Scottish and White Scottish (Fig. 6). The rest of the sample included 6% of respondents who stated they were White European (including Dutch and Swiss), three respondents who described their ethnicity as White Australian, alongside individual respondents who described their ethnicity as Black African, White Irish, African British, and Japanese.

"How would you define your ethnicity?"	Percentage
White British (including British, English, and European English)	83%
White European (including Dutch and Swiss)	6%
White Caucasian	3%
White Australian	2%
White Scottish	2%
Black African	1%
White Irish	1%
African British	1%
Japanese	1%
No answer	1%

Figure 6: Ethnicity as defined by respondents (total sample of 160 interviews)

2. Public Perceptions of the Museum Gardens

2.1 Uses of the Museum Garden

The first section of the audience research questionnaire sought to establish whether the evening of the Illuminating York festival had occasioned the first visit to the Museum Gardens. The large majority of respondents, 81%, stated that this was not their first visit to the Museum Gardens. This high figure was expected since 78% of respondents were either York residents (61%) or Yorkshire residents (17%, see Fig. 3). Of the 19% who stated this was their first visit to the Museum Gardens, most respondents were overseas or UK visitors to York (21 out of 30 respondents); 7 respondents were Yorkshire residents, and it is interesting to note that 2 respondents who stated they were York residents and had never before visited the Museum Gardens (interview 66 and 125)

Secondly, the audience survey attempted to establish the public perceptions of the Museum Gardens in terms of individuals and groups' uses of the space. The questionnaire asked respondents: "when you come here, what do you usually do?"

Of the 130 respondents who stated that this was not their first visit to the Museum Gardens, 46% stated that they came to use the gardens for a variety of leisure activities (Fig. 7). The most popular leisure activities were eating lunch, picnics and ice-cream, sitting, walking and wandering, reading, enjoying the beauty of the scenery, relaxing and 'chilling'. Other activities included walking the dog, smoking, revising for exams, sunbathing, running and cycling. The activities described by respondents tended to refer to summer and spring activities since the Museum Gardens is an outdoors space with very few public spaces for shelter from the weather. Another specific leisure activity described by five respondents was going to the park to attend events like the Viking Festival – a popular festival in York, established in 1985, which runs in February of each year and includes Viking battle re-enactments in the city.

A further 11% of respondents stated that they came to the park for both leisure and heritage activities, and 5 respondents stated they used the park exclusively for the heritage buildings. When referring to heritage, most visitors made mention of the Yorkshire Museum, and only three respondents made mention of other buildings in the Museum Gardens, including the Observatory, the Multangular Tower and the Abbey ruins. Two respondents (interviews 62 and 157) added that they brought visiting friends and family to see the heritage in the Museum Gardens.

Eleven percent (11%) stated that they only used the Museum Gardens as a short cut to walk across town.

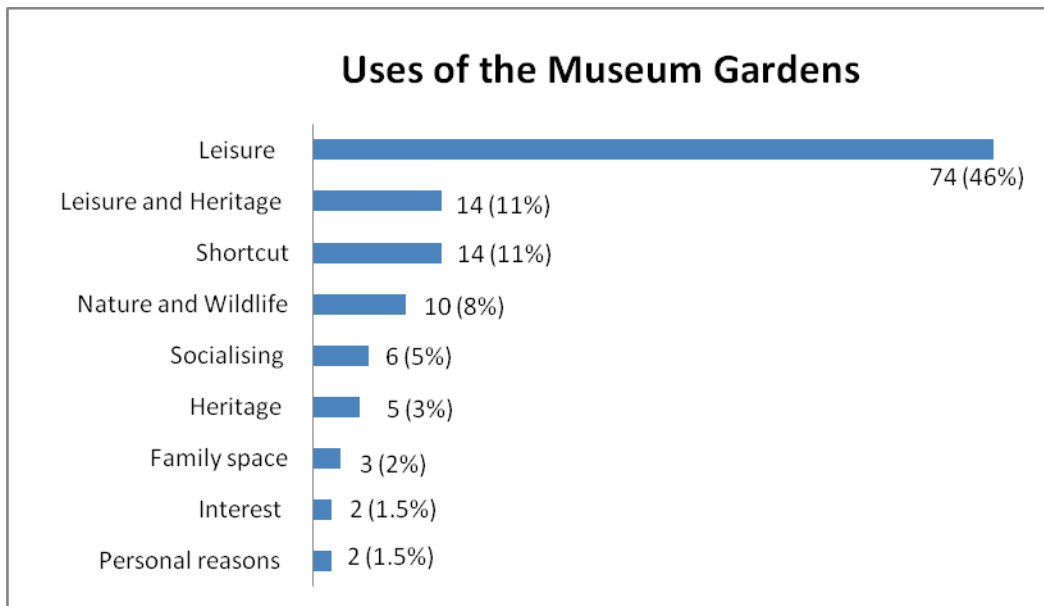


Figure 7: Main uses of the Museum Gardens (out of 130 repeat visitors in the total sample of 160 interviews)

Ten respondents stated that their main activity in the Museum Gardens was to observe and enjoy the nature and wildlife in the park, with several respondents making mention of the squirrels and the ducks, the plants and flowers and their seasonal change.

Six respondents, across all age groups, stated that their main activity in the gardens was socialising and meeting up with friends. One respondent added the Museum Gardens were a place for “*walking around, arguing and doing unmentionable things!*”(Interview 140, Female Research Associate, 35-44, York resident)

Another three respondents stated that they enjoyed the gardens as a family space to take the children to play.

Categorised under the “interest” activity were included one visitor (interview 2) who stated that his visits to the gardens were to attend Yorkshire Philosophical Society lectures, and one respondent (interview 139) who stated that they came to the park to access the public city library.

A further two respondents stated that their main reason for going to the Museum Gardens was to see and attend to the park benches with a memorial plaque to members of their family: “*we look for a seat. Because my in-laws died, and when they died we bought a seat and we’ve had their name put on the back and so there’s a seat; and so it’s a bit of a challenge because they keep moving it!*” (Interview 36, Male, 65+, York resident)

2.2 Uses of the Museum Gardens according to audience demographics

This pilot audience data suggests that younger respondents aged ‘Under 16’ to 34 years of age were most likely to relate their use of the Museum Gardens to leisure activities such as eating and reading, and also for socialising. Older respondents, aged between 35 and 64 years of age, were more likely to state that they used the gardens as a space to cut through on their way to town. As such it would seem that younger respondents had a more active social engagement with the Museum Gardens as a leisure space.

Respondents talking about wildlife and nature were most likely to be from the age group 35-44 or 65+, while those referring to heritage tended to belong to the age groups 45-54 and 65+.

No other statistically significant correlations could be drawn between uses of the Museum Gardens and other demographic variables.

3. Reasons for attending Illuminating York

In the second part of the questionnaire, respondents were asked whether this was their first time attending the Illuminating York festival, and their main reason for coming to event that evening. Figure 8 shows that the majority of respondents, 57%, were first time visitors to the Illuminating festival. This group of first time visitors was made up of five (out of a total of 5, see section 1.3) overseas visitors, 23 (out of total 28) UK visitors, 18 (out of a total of 27) Yorkshire residents, and 45 (out of a total of 98) York residents. As such, as many as 46% of respondents who stated they were York residents were also first time visitors to the festival. Some stated they had known about the festival in previous years and had been unable to attend, but the majority stated that this was the first time they had heard of and attended the event.

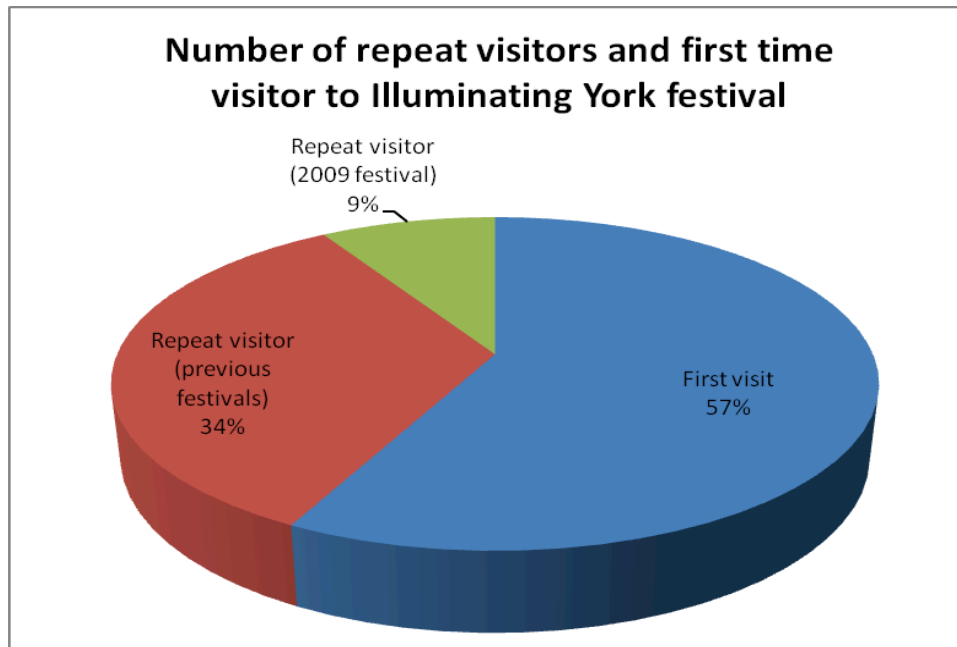


Figure 8: Repeat visitors and first time visitors to the Illuminating York 2009 festival (total sample 160 interviews)

A further 34% of respondents stated that they had attended the festival in previous years. A significant number of respondents (21) recalled the illumination of the Minster which took place during the 2007 Illuminating York festival. All respondents spoke with enthusiasm about this event, and indeed a small number of respondents (7) compared the 2009 illumination to the 2007 Minster illumination and stated that they were disappointed by the 2009 events. These respondents explained that the 2009 event did not really live up to their expectations after the 2007 event and that there wasn't enough to see that evening.

A further 9% of respondents stated that although this was the first year they had attended the festival, they had come back to see the illumination several times that week. All stated that

they had enjoyed the illuminations and wished to see them again, and several added that they were bringing friends and family to experience the event.

Male, 55-64, York resident: *“Well no I passed through here last night actually and I’ll probably be back tomorrow night with loads of kids and parents.”*(Interview 46)

Female Teacher, 35-44, Yorkshire resident: *“[S]econd time, came earlier in the week, and we really liked it, so we came back because we were walking past it, to see what was going on the wall tonight.”*(Interview 81)

Male Police Officer, 25-34, UK visitor: *“I also came a few nights ago and I’ve come back again, just visiting again, because it’s brilliant.”*(Interview 131)

This data suggests that the festival attracted a significant amount of repeat visitors, and that a significant number of visitors returned several times over the course of the week-long festival.

Respondents were at the same time asked for their main reason for attending the events that evening. Figure 9 demonstrates the variety of reasons give by respondents.

Reasons for attending event	Frequency	%
To see the event	44	28%
Passing by	24	15%
Heard about event/saw it advertised	17	11%
Recommendation	16	10%
Enjoyed previous event	9	6%
To see how event compared to previous festivals	7	4%
To take photos	5	3%
Family event/for children	4	3%
"Nothing else to do"	4	3%
Supporting organisers	4	3%
Evening event	3	2%
Bringing family or friends	2	1.3%
On holiday in York	2	1.3%
Birthday outing	1	1%
Community event	1	1%
Work reasons	1	1%
Free event	1	1%
Interest in contemporary art	1	1%
Looking for something to do	1	1%
To participate	1	1%
No comment	12	8%

Figure 9: Main reasons for attending the 2009 Illuminating York festival (total sample 160 respondents)

The majority of respondents (28%) stated that they were curious about the event, and simply wanted ‘to see what it was all about’.

A further 15% of respondent stated that they were passing by the Museum Gardens and had wandered into the event. Many added that they had been out in town for a meal or a drink;

others added that they were on their way to or from the car park when they came across the illuminations.

Eleven percent (11%) of respondents stated that they had seen the event advertised in the newspaper (including the Guardian weekend magazine and the Hull Daily Mail); others stated that they had heard about it but did not specify where. Two respondents added that they were told about the festival by someone at the Bed and Breakfast where they were staying.

Ten percent (10%) of respondents stated that the event had been recommended to them by friends or family.

Six percent (6%) stated that they had enjoyed the previous years' events, especially the Minster illuminations, and this had encouraged them to attend this year's festival. A further 4% added that they wanted to see how the event compared to previous years.

Five respondents stated that their main reason for attending the event was to take photographs of the illuminations, and one respondent stated that he was there for work reasons.

Four respondents stated they had come to the event because it was a good family event for children, while another two respondents explained that they had already come to the festival and were bringing family and friends to experience the event.

Four young female respondents, aged 16-24, all York residents, stated that they had come because they "were bored" and had "nothing else to do" (interviews 10, 11, 12 and 13). This suggests that the illuminations created a space for young people who were presumably too young to go to bars and clubs to come and socialise in the evening:

"[W]e don't have much else going on in York, so it's nice to have something."

"Yeah, like on a night there's, I don't know, it's like we don't have any night life apart from like the bars and stuff, like, for example in Paris like all the shops are open and stuff."

Other reasons for attending the festival included four respondents who stated that they were supporting the organisers of the event, three respondents who stated that the fact that the event was an evening event had attracted them and two respondents who explained they were on holiday in York and were looking for something to do for the evening.

Individual respondents added that they were attending as part of a birthday outing to York, because they enjoyed the fact that it was a community event, because they wished to participate in the event (in the tagpool drawing), because they had an interest in contemporary art (although only mentioned by one respondents at this time, several other respondents spoke of their interest in contemporary art later on in the questionnaire), or simply because they were looking for something to do.

Notes:

No statistically significant correlation could be drawn between the main reasons for visiting and the various audience demographics variables.

4. Public perceptions and values of cultural heritage

The pilot audience questionnaire sought to establish the public perceptions of the heritage spaces and buildings of the Museum Gardens, both in the ways individuals would consider these during the daytime and as part of an evening art event. As such, respondents were asked “how do you normally feel about historic old buildings like this?”

Public values of heritage	Frequency	%
Aesthetic value (including aesthetic value for the city)	38 (15)	24% (9%)
Historical value	29	18%
Interest value	22	14%
Heritage value (including bequest value)	20	13%
"Love them"	13	8%
Enjoyment	12	7.5%
Pride	8	5%
Professional value	2	1.3%
Contemporary use value	2	1.3%
Educational value for children	1	1%
No special value	5	3%
No answer	8	5%

Figure 10: Public values cultural heritage ('historic old buildings') with reference to the Museum Gardens (total sample 160 interviews)

Figure 10 shows that the majority of respondents, 24%, identified how they felt about historic old buildings as related to an aesthetic value of cultural heritage. In particular, many respondents (9%) added that the historic buildings were important in terms of their aesthetic value for the city of York; that they were an important part of the scenery of the city. Respondents often commented that the historic buildings ‘looked nice’ and were ‘pretty’ or ‘lovely’.

Other respondents (18% of the total sample) spoke of their feelings towards old buildings in terms of a sense of history:

Female Teacher, 16-14, UK visitor: *“I like the fact that there’s a bit of history behind it. And that there’s a story to tell. Yeah, that’s what I like; the fact that there’s a story somewhere and I like to know what the story is.”* (Interview 54)

Male Musician, 55-64, UK visitor: *“I think it gives us a sense of who we are, where we are, where we’ve come from. The historical aspect is very important.”* (Interview 57)

Female student, under 16, Yorkshire resident: *“Just wondering what’s happened in, you know, who placed those stones there and what sort of people they were, and what kind of lives they led. Just ... just the wonder of what went before you really.”* (Interview 74)

Male Accountant, 45-54, York resident: *“They matter. Here matters. It matters as a Roman road under my house. Ehm ... as to how it matters it’s difficult to say except when you live somewhere where it is here you notice when there’s something missing.”* (Interview 145)

Thirteen per cent (13%) of respondents spoke of their interest in historic buildings, many referring to a generally disengaged or broad interest in heritage, but with a few respondents speaking with enthusiasm about their fascination with historic buildings. A further 8% of respondents simply stated they “loved” historic buildings.

Another 13% of respondents related their thoughts about historic buildings to a sense of heritage, with three respondents adding that historic buildings should be preserved for future generations:

Male, 25-34, York resident: *“I’d like to see a bit more sort of preservation going on on them, you know, so future generations can still observe them, you know I’d like to think they’ll still be around if we ever have grand kids so they can appreciate.”* (Interview 51)

Twelve respondents (7.5% of the total sample) stated that seeing or visiting heritage spaces provoked feelings of enjoyment; while 5% stated that historic buildings evoked a sense of pride:

Male Civil Servant, 35-44, York resident: *“It’s a big part of the heritage of York isn’t it in terms of the historical buildings and things here so yeah, makes us very proud of what we’ve got really.”* (Interview 20)

Male, 16-24, York resident: *“[I]t just kind of makes York a bit different ‘cause a lot of cities don’t have as many, like the walls, we still have our walls, a lot of cities don’t.”* (Interview 22)

Female, 25-34, York resident: *“Very proud to live in York and just can’t believe the history of it, how far back it goes, yeah. How beautiful it still all looks, so, yeah.”* (Interview 113)

A small number of respondents (2) spoke of their personal/professional feelings towards historic buildings (one as an architect and the other as working in restoration).

Another two respondents spoke of the contemporary use value of historic buildings – how they should be actively used:

Female, 25-34, York resident: *“They’re not museums; they’re part of York city life, if you live in York.”* (Interview 2)

One respondent spoke of the educational value of historic buildings for children.

A total of five respondents stated that they had no particular feelings either way towards historic buildings and that they held no particular meaning or value for them.

The data from this pilot audience survey suggests that visitors were not particularly engaging with the historic built environment of the Museum Gardens at the time.

Note:

It is interesting to note that there were no discernable correlations between the various demographic variables and individuals attitudes to historic buildings. A similar number of responses could be found across various age groups, origins, etc. This suggests that although many respondents spoke of similar ideas and notion surrounding built heritage, these were not dependent on age or socio-economic variables, instead theses thoughts and feelings about cultural heritage were constructed on a much more personal level.

5. Public perceptions and attitudes towards contemporary art interventions in a heritage space

The main objective of this pilot audience research project was to examine how and to what extent the sound and light art interventions of the Illuminating York festival impacted on public perceptions of the cultural heritage buildings and spaces of the Museum Gardens. As such, respondents were asked, “how do you feel about [the historic old building] now that it is hosting an arts activity?” A follow up question “does it change the way you think or feel about the buildings” was sometimes asked by interviewers to encourage respondents to expand on their answers. However, since this question was not asked systematically, no statistical table could be drawn up but general trends are described below.

Public perceptions of art interventions in heritage spaces	Frequency	%
Art opens heritage to wider audiences	36	23%
Positive - no comment	31	19%
Art enables audiences to experience heritage in different ways	19	12%
Enjoyable event	15	9%
Art brings historic buildings to life	10	6%
Art renews wider audiences' interest in heritage	9	5.6%
Art combines old and new, past and present	9	5.6%
Good evening event	5	3%
Creative event	4	2.5%
Art attracts tourism to York (positive)	3	2%
'Ok' (not damaging buildings)	5	3%
Negative	4	2.5%
No answer	10	6%

Figure 11: Public perceptions of the art illuminations on the Museum Garden’s historic buildings (total sample 160 interviews)

Figure 11 describes the public attitude towards the art on display on the Museum Gardens, especially the Multangular Tower, during the illuminations.

The large majority of respondents, 88%, stated that they felt positively about the form of the festival using historic buildings as the setting for contemporary light and sound installations. Many respondents (19%) did not add any further comments; it is possible many didn’t feel at ease talking about their feelings towards art, indeed a small number of respondents explained

that they were ‘not arty’ and felt uncomfortable talking about art. However, a number of recurrent themes were drawn out from the interviews.

5.1 Art interventions open up heritage to wider audiences

Twenty-three percent (23%) felt that the art displays attracted wider audiences, especially ‘non-users’ and people who are not regular visitors to heritage spaces, including young people and families with children. Respondents stated that art could help open up and make visible the heritage of the Museum Gardens to wider and more diverse audiences. Below is a selection of quotes describing how respondents reflected on the impact of art for heritage:

Art attracts “non-users”/art can help make heritage visible to “non-users”:

Male working in IT, 35-44, York resident: *“I think it’s great, this kind of activity it’s more likely I’m going to come and see [a historic building] with this kind of thing.”* (Interview 3)

Female, 16-24, York resident: *“I think it brings more notice to them and it attracts more people to see them, like normally I’d just walk through here and not think much about them but with the lights on it looks really good.”* (Interview 11)

Female, 16-24, York resident: *“I think it’s fantastic like things like this should be done more to get people to come out and look and residents of York to see that it is here for them as well as tourists.”* (Interview 24)

Male, 16-24, Yorkshire resident: *“I think it’s great that they’ve actually got a different use and a different purpose I suppose. Attracting different people that might not come for just the sole purpose of looking at historical buildings, so yeah, it’s good.”* (Interview 59)

Female Scientist, 25-34, UK visitor: *“I think it’s fun. (...) if you bring people here and make them interested in things in a way they might not otherwise be, I think it’s great.”* (Interview 70)

Female Finance Administrator, 35-44. Yorkshire resident: *“[I]t’s just an old building and they probably wouldn’t look twice at it, but this is bringing in more people in that probably wouldn’t come normally.”* (Interview 76)

Female working in IT, 35-44, UK visitor: *“[I]t brings more people to it, perhaps different age groups of people who might not be bothered with old walls.”* (Interview 101)

Art makes buildings more accessible to wider audiences:

Male Musician, 25-34, York resident: *“[I]t’s a good backdrop. It stops them being sacrosanct and sort of opens them up to everybody, and they’re still there, so. That’s good.”* (Interview 142)

Art can help discover new heritage spaces:

Female Sandwich Maker, 25-34, York resident: *“[W]e’d never – well I didn’t know about King’s Manor before. I hadn’t been round the back. I’d used that bit as a cut through before but I’d never actually seen inside that little courtyard and stuff.”* (Interview 9)

Female, Under 16, York resident: *“I just think it looks really good and it’s a good way to get people interested in the old buildings if they’ve not seen them before. (...) if people don’t know that they exist but hear about the festival they’ll come down and they find out about them.”* (Interview 48)

Art creates family and community spaces:

Female, 55-64, UK visitor: *“I think that the technology that’s in use against the old building, and the fact that the children can roll around, so it brings in the young and the old, I mean we’re fairly old and there’s some really young children enjoying it, I think it’s brought it to life for the night.”*(Interview 17)

Female Teacher, 25-34, UK visitor: *“[T]he fact that there’s like children over there having a go at it as well I think it really brings it forwards for the children as well.”* (Interview 25)

Male Teacher, 25-34, York resident: *“It’s good for the family isn’t it. And the kids, it may be not something they’re interested in usually and it’s a good reason to bring them out, and show them around.”* (Interview 26)

Male Graphic Designer, 25-34, York resident: *“I also really like that fact that as well here the kids are messing around under the lights and that’s kind of, it’s not too kind of up itself if you know what I mean, it’s kind of quite fun you know.”*(Interview 49)

Female, 16-24, Yorkshire resident: *“I think it’s good, it brings in a lot of people together in York. I think it’s a good way to get the adults and the children all together.”* (Interview 155)

Female University Lecturer, 55-64, York resident: *“[I]t also creates much more of a fairground atmosphere and people bring their kids and so it’s quite different kind of thing I think, but I think it’s fun and good.”* (Interview 158)

5.2 Art interventions enable audiences to experience heritage in different ways

A second recurrent theme discussed by 12% of respondents was how art could enable visitors to experience heritage in a different way. In this case, the illuminations stimulated different approaches and different ways of seeing and engaging with heritage.

Art offers new ways of seeing heritage:

Male NHS Manager, 45-54, York resident: *“I mean I think that if it encourages more people (...) to sort of become more aware of the buildings, that’s great, it will be good for their longevity, I think it adds a different dimension to them as well, it’s an interesting slant.”* (Interview 31)

Female, 55-64, York resident: *“[I]t’s a nice feeling to say that this has been here a long time. And it’s been used for many purposes over the years, and that this is just a modern interpretation of the ancient building, it’s nice, a nice idea.”* (Interview 43)

Female, 16-24, Yorkshire resident: *“I think it’s a brilliant use you know, what’s the point in it standing there doing nothing, you know? To me I wouldn’t go round and look around the museum, it wouldn’t interest me. But coming and doing this, you know, is, you know, it’s something, a better way of us appreciating, you know, what is an old building, and then also doing something. I mean we’re not really big art fans are we really? (...) but something like this, you know, it’s nice to look at, it’s something different, it makes a change.”* (Interview 50)

Male Teacher from Australia, 45-54, overseas visitor: *“It adds a different perspective, that sort of probably draws a lot of locals back to them as well, for a different perspective.”*(Interview 52)

Female GP, 45-54, York resident: *“It just comes alive, it puts a completely different slant on the place. It’s almost magical, and yeah! I find this is fantastic because it sort of morphs into something completely different, however long you stand there for five minutes, it’s not the same for five minutes, it really is very, very transitory, it’s lovely, I like it a lot.”* (Interview 120)

Female Pharmacist, 16-24, Yorkshire resident: *“[I]t’s just getting the people together and looking at things in a different light and maybe appreciating the buildings in a different way that maybe people who aren’t as culturally aware or oriented, maybe in a different way.”* (Interview 156)

Art helps discover new aspects of heritage:

Female School Secretary, 35-44, York resident: *“I think it’s fantastic, it brings more people in and gets more people interested. And gives you a whole different perspective on what you’re looking at, in a totally different light. (...) You sort of take notice of things that you probably wouldn’t you know, just walking through.”*(Interview 64)

Female, 25-34, York resident: *“It just gets you to see the buildings in a different way and you see the shapes and just see that they’re not actually just these old things stuck in the ground they’re actually something that we’re living with as well.”* (Interview 119)

Art stimulates imagination:

Male Civil Servant, 35-44, York resident: *“It’s quite an interesting perspective in terms of – well you’ve got both the historical buildings behind with very modern technology portrayed on top really, so it’s all, all quite thought-provoking in terms of that, quite stimulating really.”* (Interview 20)

Female, 35-44, York resident: *“It illuminates something that maybe somebody hasn’t ever thought about before. It’s adding colour and light and it’s bringing people into a place maybe where they wouldn’t have loitered before.”* (Interview 38)

5.3 ‘Enjoyable events’

A significant number of respondents (9%) stated that the art illuminations created a very enjoyable event, and many added that they had never seen anything like it before.

Female, 16-24, York resident: *“I think it’s artistically beautiful. And I think that people have a real passion for the art, I mean it just looks incredible. It makes me feel very, very happy inside.”* (Interview 12)

Male, 65+, York resident: *“I think it’s wonderful. I will remember this for a long time.”* (Interview 36)

5.4 Art interventions bring heritage to life

Six percent (6%) of respondents described how art interventions could bring heritage to life and provide a more stimulating and exciting active means of engaging with historic buildings.

Male Farm worker, 55-64, Yorkshire resident: *“[I]t’s a bit of fun (...) Most of these things should live so, you know, they’re not just dead objects.”* (Interview 1)

Male CEO, 45-54, York resident: *“Well it brings them alive, it makes them, the whole content, every aspect, much more interesting and you see it with new eyes, yeah.”* (Interview 4)

Female Teacher, 16-24, UK visitor: *“It’s great to bring stuff like this alive because otherwise it, things like this just sit here, and people, even residents really, become oblivious to it. I mean we’re tourists so for us it’s exciting anyway, but it’s just upsetting when residents become oblivious to the fact that there is stuff like this around.”* (Interview 54)

Male working in IT, 45-54, York resident: *“It’s more vibrant and it can be a bit static, again I suppose for young people it can be a bit staid, so if you get something like this going on, it’s – it’s fantastic because it’s much more interesting, gets people a bit more excited about it I guess.”* (Interview 65)

Female, 16-24, York resident: *“It displays two different sides to things and it shows that it’s not just boring and it’s not just sitting there, it’s showing that it can be used for something else, it’s quite useful I think.”* (Interview 84)

Male Journalist, 25-34, UK visitor: *“It’s nice to see the history used sort of in a modern way, to show that York isn’t just old fashioned.”* (Interview 131)

5.5 Art interventions renews wider audiences’ interest in heritage

Nine respondents (9) explained how art interventions like the illuminations helped renew their interest in heritage, especially for York residents. Local audience explained how the illuminations help renew their engagement with their local heritage which many conceded they took for granted in their everyday life. This group stated that art events could attract them to re-visiting local heritage spaces.

Art makes heritage visible and renews audience interest in historic buildings:

Male, 35-44, York resident: *“I think it’s great just to bring people in, make them interested in the place, and, you know I think that’s what they’re there for. Places become sort of (...)too much like a museum. People walk past it but don’t really see it. Something like this will bring it alive, you know. And that’s great. Anything that makes people interested in what they’re looking at, and not just seeing it but really seeing it.”* (Interview 32)

Male Buildings Restorer, 55-64, York resident: *“I think it’s good. It does actually bring people out to see the historic aspect as well as the illuminations. (...) I think it might encourage people to perhaps appreciate the heritage a lot more. (...) I think a lot of people walk around with their eyes shut. And it does open them to actually look at the building itself, behind the illuminations. I think they’ll probably appreciate it more. It’s like the old things isn’t it, that people never look up, do they?”* (Interview 45)

Female PA, 25-35, visitor from Australia: *“I think it’s combining lots of, the sort of modern with the historical and drawing attention to places people might not recognise, so in that respect I think it’s doing a brilliant job.”* (Interview 61)

Female Teacher, 35-44, UK visitor: *“A great way to bring people, like we were, just passing, on a night out, and just wander in. And we might not have come here tomorrow. So now tomorrow in the daytime if we pass it we’ll definitely come and explore further.”* (Interview 71)

Male, 65+, York resident: *“I think people will come back and look at the things differently in daylight.”* (Interview 107)

Female GP< 45-54, York resident: *“[W]e were debating about where it was because of course that tower you walk past a million times and then you never even look at it. Whereas you look at the Abbey and you look at the Yorkshire Museum, but that Tower I have walked past a million times and I’ve never looked at it like I’ve looked at it tonight.”*(Interview 120)

Female, 35-44, York resident: *“It’s good, because it’ll bring people in that wouldn’t normally look at it. So they may look at it obviously in a different light, they might come again during the day. Take note of what’s around in York, because if you live here, you don’t really. So it’s just a different way of drawing attention to it again, to open your eyes to it.”* (Interview 149)

Male Fire Fighter, 35-44, York resident: *“It’s nice to get people out, it’s nice to be sociable, and then people maybe appreciate the buildings and think about other things so yeah, it’s nice.”* (Interview 157)

Art can encourage repeat visits to heritage:

Female, 35-44, York resident: *“I mean I would have come, next come into the Museum Gardens in the daylight, I’ll probably take a better notice of the building when I knew it was there but I kind of just walked past it.”* (Interview 6)

Female, 55-64, UK visitor: *“I think it’s good because it brings other people, different people in here rather than just people who are looking at the building, it probably brings different people in and then they see a bit more and they probably want to find out a bit more.”*(Interview 17)

5.6 Art interventions connect past and present

A further 9 respondents reflected on the way in which contemporary art could create links between the past and the present moment.

Male Engraver, 25-34, York resident: *"It's modern and, you know, it's showcasing both, it's showcasing the old Roman tower and the modern sort of entertainment art. Yeah, big fan of it, it's good."* (Interview 40)

Female working in Administration, 45-54, York resident: *"I think they go really well together, (...) the effect of the old building works really well. I don't think there's anything wrong with mixing old and new."* (Interview 47)

Female Teaching Assistant, 45-54, York resident: *"[I]t links the past and the present, and it brings it very much into the 21st century."* (Interview 103)

5.7 Other comments

Smaller groups of respondents reflected on different aspects on their experience of the illuminations. Five respondents spoke of the success of the festival as a rare evening event; four respondents commented on the creative nature of the illuminations, and three respondents stated the illumination were beneficial to York as they attracted tourism to the city.

In terms of the illumination being a successful evening event, respondents commented on how the art created new evening spaces for young people and families with children.

Art opens up new evening spaces:

Male Photographer, 25-34, Yorkshire resident: *"I think it's good, 'cause otherwise this would have about fifteen people walking through it maybe and that's it. A few people on pushbikes and that's it. Whereas you've got two hundred people all in a place that's probably empty at this time of night I would have guessed."*(Interview 60)

Male Student, 25-34, Yorkshire resident: *"I like the fact that it's an evening activity as well; there's not much to do on an evening for younger people as well as you know, those who can't go to pubs or whatever."*(Interview 82)

Male Service Manager, 35-44, York resident: *"York is quite a quiet town, there's not a lot to do here on a night, so it's nice to see a lot people out and about really."* (Interview 150)

Female Musician, 25-34, York resident: *"I like the fact that you come here and there's loads of people here at night, and the space is being really well used, you know it's not a dead space, 'cause this is really busy in the day, it's such a brilliant area that it's great to have something going on that brings people in in the evening time as well. It's a nice sort of festival atmosphere about it as well."*(Interview 160)

One mother further commented that the art interventions created evening spaces in which she and her family felt safe:

Female School Secretary, 35-44, York resident: *“Cause you often struggle for things to do of an evening with a younger family. You know it’s great to be able to come out, into the Museum Gardens, you know, bring the children as well, and it’s safe as well, you’re sort of not on the streets sort of wandering around it, you feel extremely safe in the Museum Gardens with it all being, you know, there’s walls and it’s all fenced off and things, so it’s brilliant.”* (Interview 64)

A small percentage of respondents (3%) stated they felt “ok” about the illuminations; this group did not engage with the event but felt it was acceptable as it was not damaging the buildings.

Although a small number of respondents stated their disappointment with the 2009 festival in comparison to previous years (see previous section), only 4 respondents, all aged over 65, expressed negative views towards the art interventions:

Male, 65+, UK visitor from Scotland: *“I don’t like to see that. (...) it’s like graffiti.”* (Interview 27)

Female, 65+, UK visitors from Scotland: *“I think it’s a waste of time. (...) The park is beautiful but art to me is just a load of nonsense.”* (Interview 28)

Female, 65+, York resident: *“It’s very frivolous. And it’s just flossy. It’s like sugar.”* (Interview 42)

5.8 Conclusion

This pilot audience research has gone some way in providing evidence of the potential benefits of using art interventions in heritage spaces. A number of themes were drawn out from the interviews and it is clear that in fact all these categories overlap.

Perhaps most importantly, the audience data revealed the potential of art for attracting wider audiences to heritage spaces. The event was enjoyed by people of all ages: it simultaneously created a community space, a space where families with young children felt safe, and a space where young people felt they belonged. However, it must be noted that some older respondents (55 to 65+) did complain that it was exclusively a children’s event.

The art event attracted a significantly high number of “non-users” or people who do not frequently visit heritage spaces. Indeed, although the large majority of respondents were familiar with the Museum Gardens very few mentioned the historic built environment of the park or its museum as their principal reason for coming to the gardens (see section 2). Many however reflected that the art event could encourage them to look more closely and with more careful attention at such heritage spaces. The pilot audience project revealed that art could help bring heritage to life for audiences, renew their interests and captivate their

imagination to discover new ways of seeing historic places and spaces. Furthermore, the data revealed that the art event led a significant number of respondents to state that they would visit the heritage spaces again during the daytime.

Of the few respondents who were explicitly asked whether the art on display changed their thoughts or feelings towards the historic buildings, nearly all answered no, the art work did *not* change their feelings towards the heritage spaces. However, this does not signify that respondents were against the event, indeed all stated they were enjoying the evening; instead it may be that the wording of the question was too directive and this influenced respondents' decision to answer in the negative form. It is apparent through the rest of the data that many respondents reflected on how the art encouraged new ways of seeing heritage, however this may have been considered as additional and not distinctive.

Although the event may not have engaged audiences directly with the wider historical meaning or value of the heritage spaces, it did however succeed in making these spaces visible and in renewing public interest in heritage, especially for local residents, and the data suggests that the event would attract repeat visitors. Furthermore, the art provided a unique and memorable experience of heritage as a shared community moment.

Note:

No correlations could be drawn between these responses and the audience demographic variables. However it has been noted that the very small group who expressed negative views about the event were all aged over 65.

6. Art and Music events as motivators for repeat visits to heritage spaces

The final part of the audience questionnaire asked respondents whether more contemporary art and music events would encourage them to come again or more often to the Museum Gardens and York's other historical sites. The overwhelming majority of respondents, 85%, stated that they would come again to such an event as the illuminations (Fig. 12).

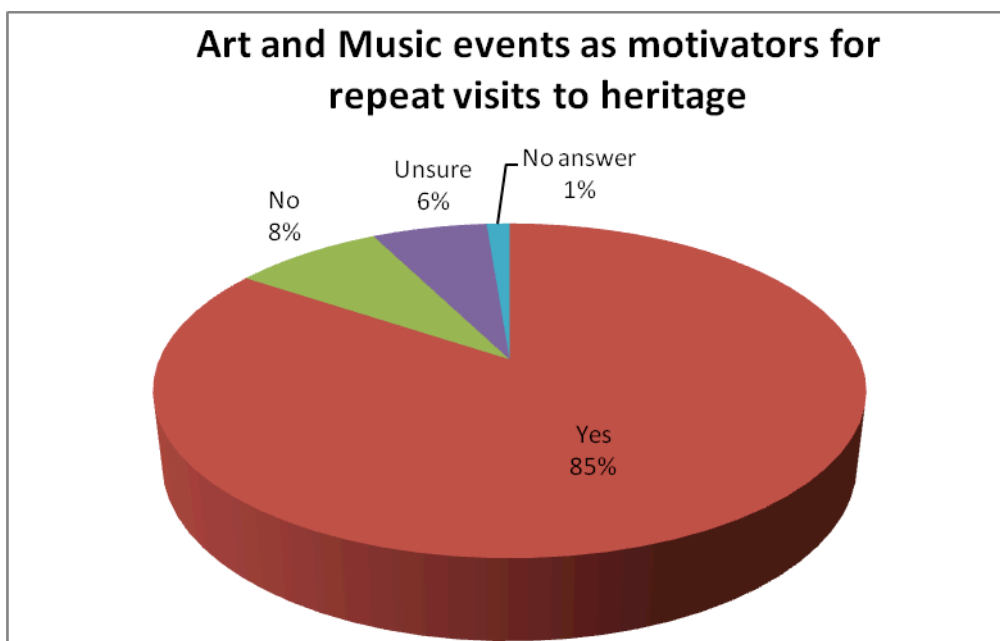


Figure 12: Contemporary art and music events as a motivator for repeat and more frequent visits to historic sites (total sample 160 interviews)

When asked to expand on why art and music might encourage them to come again or more frequently to York's historic places, respondents emphasised and further reflected on many of the themes from earlier parts of the questionnaires. Figure 13 describes some of the reasons and explanations of respondents.

The notion that art and music create enjoyable events was often raised (27 out of 135 respondents who stated that art and music would encourage them to come again and more often to heritage spaces). In particular, respondents commented on how art and music create community events (8 out of 135), which are enjoyed by both families with children (5 out of 135) and also by young teenagers (3 out of 135):

Community events:

Female, 55-64, York resident: *“I think there’s a whole mixture of people here, there’s young people, there’s people in pushchairs, there’s old people, it brings everybody together.”* (Interview 14)

Female, 16-24, York resident: *“I just think it’s a gatherer. I mean when they celebrate something that’s already here but making it maybe it a more relevant to fashion, so bringing art and music into it, and making people able to contribute themselves, I think it’s great, gathers people.”* (Interview 92)

Events for young people:

Female, 16-24, Yorkshire resident: *“[C]ertainly more you know, more younger things, I mean the kind of stuff that you sometimes have put on like the old, I don’t know, band dances and stuff like that kind of music, it’s not really for us! It wouldn’t draw us. But if there was something like, I don’t know, like a mini party in the park kind of thing, you know, not on a huge scale, but you know, I’d consider buying a ticket to come in.”* (Interview 50)

Family events:

Female School Secretary, 35-44, York resident: *“‘Cause you often struggle for things to do of an evening with a younger family. You know it’s great to be able to come out, into the Museum Gardens, you know, bring the children as well, and it’s safe as well, you’re sort of not on the streets sort of wandering round it, you feel extremely safe in the Museum Gardens with it all being, you know, there’s walls around and it’s all fenced off and things, so it’s brilliant.”* (Interview 64)

Very interestingly, many local York resident respondents articulated a sense that the illuminations were a local event for residents, and not for tourists. Indeed, other IPUP audience data reports have discussed the notion that York residents feel very aware that the city’s cultural attractions are directed towards tourists, and there is a sense of disconnect between local heritage and local community. Although the Illuminating York festival is promoted by the City of York Council to attract tourism to the city, for residents however there was a strong sense that the event was created for them, and in this way they reclaimed their local heritage from tourists and the art event renewed local public interest in heritage:

Female ‘House Mum’, 16-24, York resident: *“I think if this happens more in York it will encourage residents around York to come and have a look at what is actually here for them, and especially, you know, the York Minster, the walls, something like that”* (Interview 23)

Female ‘House Mum’, 16-24, York resident: *“[I]f you just did more things throughout York I think the residents would be more interested because I think sometimes the resident’s feel like they’re being pushed aside towards the tourists, so it’s not really our city anymore, it’s more of a tourist city (...) And it’s not very fair really. I mean I didn’t realise it was going to be like this or I would have brought my three children with me.”* (Interview 24)

Female, 35-44, York resident: *“We’ve just enjoyed it. We’ve enjoyed the atmosphere and everyone walking round, and it’s just been – we’ve actually felt like tourists haven’t we as well.”* (Interview 149)

Art and Music events to encourage repeat visits to heritage: Why?	Frequency
Enjoyable event	27
“Something different”	20
Renews interest in heritage	15
Interest in art and/or music	11
Showcases York as vibrant and modern city	8
Community event	8
Evening event	6
Family event	5
Not many events in York	4
Event for residents	4
Good event for young people	3
Outdoor event	2
Free event	2
Contemporary use of heritage	1
No comment	20

Figure 13: Reasons and comments why art and music events would encourage visitors to come again and more frequently to the Museum Gardens and York’s other historic sites (out of 135 positive answers, total sample 160 interviews)

A second common response was that art events created ‘something different’, and for the many, the illuminations were something to do, especially of an evening in York, where there are not many night time public events.

Evening event:

Male Hospital porter, 55-64, York resident: *“I think it’s good to have things going on in the evening, because things are usually closed in the evening aren’t they, so I think it’s good to keep them open and encourage people to come in and enjoy it.”* (Interview 88)

Male IT Consultant, 25-34, York resident: *“I think York’s really nice of the night as well, and it’s just a shame that we probably don’t take as much advantage of the city on a night than we could do”* (Interview 151)

Few public events in York:

Male Graphic Designer, 25-34, York resident: *“I do like the kind of mix of kinds of the high tech stuff and the setting of York. I don’t know there’s not a great deal of very interesting things going on here as opposed to places like Leeds which isn’t that far away really”* (Interview 49)

Male, 16-24, Yorkshire resident: *“York’s a lovely city but it’s quite small, there’s not that much to do if you’re a local resident, once you’ve been everywhere once or twice. Ehm,*

you're quite limited to what you can do. So coming here, and seeing different exhibitions would be fantastic." (Interview 59)

A significant number of respondents (15), the majority of which were young local York residents, further reflected on how art and music events could renew their interest in local heritage spaces and historic buildings, and how events could provide different ways of looking at local cultural built heritage:

Music and art events renew interest in heritage:

Male Civil Servant, 35-44, York resident: *"I think it's an excuse to come and enjoy yourself and enjoy things that you perhaps take for granted really in terms of, you know, you walk past these things everyday, you don't realise what's there, when actually, you put a new slant on these things and then it makes you appreciate what you've got really, so, yeah."* (Interview 20)

Male, 16-24, York resident: *"I suppose it's just like the scenery but it's being shown differently 'cause I mean you don't go oh yeah – possibly when you come to York as a visitor you go 'Oh, wow, wow, it's amazing' and when you're living here it's like 'oh I saw that yesterday and the day before'. It's the familiar and this is a slight change in the familiar which you can still see 'oh it's that building' but ..."* (Interview 22)

Female, Under 16, York resident: *"[I]t's good to have something different 'cause, well a lot of my friends don't take notice of anything really whereas I've seen quite a few of them tonight just because this has been on. And it's really interesting."*(Interview 48)

Female Teacher, 16-24, UK visitor: *"It's nice to know that if you're gonna visit somewhere there's not just gonna be the same things to look at, I mean, it's amazing that you can go and see the Minster and stuff like that. But you can only do it so many times before you know what's there. But if there's something new going on everything, particularly things like this, I mean to host something like this outside, and stuff like that, it's amazing."* (Interview 54)

Female Student, 16-24, York resident: *"Because at the moment we kind of find that we live in York there's no reason to go and visit the sites, you know. So if something was different there that made us kind of get up and go then I think that would be a reason to go."* (Interview 118)

Male Student, 16-24, UK visitor: *"Ehm just because it adds I think a kind of more like, I don't know, another like factor to like, I wouldn't normally go to like historical places probably unless I was just looking round, like on a day. So that adds more of a reason to travel across to kind of like an event like this."* (Interview 159)

Furthermore, a small group of predominantly York residents added that contemporary art and music events could bring the city to life and showcase York as a modern and vibrant city:

Female Scientific Manager, 35-44, York resident: *"We're both quite into art and ... you don't always have to go to the Tate Modern do you? You know, it's two hours on the train, it's a lot of money (...) it's nice to have something spontaneous."* (Interview 38)

Male working in Management, 25-34, York resident: *“Well the new ways and the old ways and using the old buildings and the old walls and all that to, you know, promote things. I think it’s a very good idea.”* (Interview 46)

Another significant group of respondents (11) stated that it was their interest in music and/or contemporary art rather than heritage itself which would attract them to come again and more often to such events, while other commented on positive aspects of the event such as it being a free event or an outdoors event, as a motivational factor for coming again and more often to events like the illuminations.

In the small group of respondents who responded in the negative form, stating that art and music would not encourage them to come again or more often, and for the group who felt unsure either way, the main reason for their answer related either to the fact that they already considered themselves to be frequent visitors, or they were UK visitors and therefore lived too far from York, or they stated that they were not interested in contemporary art or music. This group was largely composed of older respondents, between 55 and 65+ years old.

7. Conclusion

The main objective of this audience research project was to investigate the impact on audiences of art interventions in heritage spaces, in this case study looking at the Illuminating York festival 2009 in the Museum Gardens. The demographic data was collected in order to determine the profile of the visiting audience to York St. Mary's, and examine how art interventions in heritage spaces have the potential of attracting wider and more diverse audiences.

The audience profile from this pilot audience project suggests that art and sound event have a wider appeal across all age groups, especially for families with children and young teenagers. Under 16s were not interviewed as part of this pilot audience research project, however it should be noted that they were many children present at the event, and indeed, the fact that the illuminations provided a good event for families with young children was often commented upon throughout the interviews. The smallest age group was represented by the 65+ – this may be due to the fact the illuminations took place late at night during the cold months of October, but it may also be related to the possibility that older individuals may feel as able to connect with contemporary light and sound interventions. Indeed, this notion was expressed by a small number of older respondents. In terms of educational background and occupation of main income earner however, the audience profile was in both cases in the highest brackets or categories. The event did succeed in attracting a large number of local residents.

The main theme and conclusion that emerges from this audience data report is the success of contemporary art installations in creating shared community events which have the potential to attract wider and more diverse audiences. This was commented upon numerous times throughout the audience data. In particular, respondents felt that the art events had the potential to attract individuals with little or no interest in heritage, and at the same time, renew wider public interest in the built environment. This was aided by the notion that art event could provide new ways of seeing and new ways of looking at heritage spaces and bringing them to life, which contributed to a different engagement with historic buildings. Although it is not clear that the event enabled visitors to connect with historical meanings, it is certain that the illuminations raised public awareness and appreciation of the cultural heritage of the Museum Gardens. This was especially true for local residents.

The data suggested that the main public perception of the historic buildings in the Museum Gardens was related to a relatively disengaged aesthetic appreciation of the wider pleasant scenery of the park, as a space for leisure and relaxation. The art event enabled many respondents to (re)discover other aspects of the gardens, and renew their appreciation for local cultural heritage which many residents conceded they often took for granted.

The data also suggest that art interventions have the potential to spark further interest in history and attract future repeat visitors to heritage spaces.

This report has gone some way in providing evidence of the role of contemporary art interventions for York wider historic spaces, their potential for attracting wider audiences and providing unique and shared experience of heritage.