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Support & Thank you



Introduction

Od Arts Festival: Still and still moving

The festival takes its name from the Od: a crooked stream that meanders through the neighbouring villages of East and West Coker.

Od Arts Festival 2023 builds on the work developed through two previous festivals (in 2018 and 2021) and was the culmination of 18 months of artistic and audience development centred on the villages of East Coker and West Coker in South Somerset. Exhibitions, performances, film and workshops led by international and local artists, were sited in collaboration with local venues and partners. An online programme featuring artists' films, audio works and a presentation from the pre-festival seminar ran concurrently and continued for a week after the festival.

Od Arts Festival 2023 was co-curated by Simon Lee Dicker, founding Director of OSR Projects and Cat Bagg, a curator, producer and artist with 15 years' experience in contemporary visual art. Since 2018, the direction of the festival has been steered by a volunteer committee of seven local people of different generations, professions and walks of life.

The festival's title, Still and still moving, is taken from T.S Eliot's poem East Coker, the second of his famous *Four Quartets:*

...Love is most nearly itself
When here and now cease to matter.
Old men ought to be explorers
Here or there does not matter
We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion

Via newly commissioned and pre-existing artworks sited in intriguing contexts across the two villages, workshops, guided walks and a silent disco, the festival explored the different ways we navigate, move in and connect to the world around us, from ancient way-making and international trade to the almost imperceptible slow motion of plants and rocks.

About OSR Projects

From a base in rural Somerset, UK, OSR Projects have produced ambitious, critically and socially engaged art projects since 2011, in the South West and further afield. Past projects include Weather Station (2015-16), a mobile pavilion for the collection of images and objects inspired by the beautiful and broken landscapes of the South West; Ropewalkers (2016), an art programme responding to the architecture, history and materials of the historic Dawes' Twineworks; What are you looking at? (2021) An exhibition of new work by artist Angela Charles and award winning film by Liberty Smith exploring notions of 'seeing' in art from the perspective of a visually impaired painter; A weekend at Hotel Palenque (2023) OSR Projects were invited to take over the Arnolfini theatre space with work by Andy Parker, Sam Jukes and Simon Lee Dicker; and the biennial Od Arts Festival, now in its third iteration.

OSR Projects registered as a community interest company in 2019 with a specific mission to support artists and local communities where their activities take place. OSR Projects is led by founding directors Simon Lee Dicker and Chantelle Henocq, alongside non-executive directors Bob Gelsthorpe, Rowan Lear, Jo Bickerton and Sam Jukes.

Location

East and West Coker are neighbouring villages and civil parishes within the district of South Somerset. Together, their populations number 3,703 residents. 12.75% of their populations are under 16, 31.4% are over 65 years of age. 98.2% of residents are 'White British' and 1.4% are Black and Minority Ethnic. 11% of residents are unpaid care providers and 12.7% are registered Disabled under the Equality Act. 12.7% of the villages' population aged over 16 have no qualifications, and 44.75% of households are 'deprived in one or more dimension'.

West Coker is served by a regular but limited bus service whilst the bus service in East Coker is very limited and irregular. The nearest train stations are Yeovil Penn Mill and Yeovil Junction, around 5 and 3½ miles away, from which there are good connections to Bristol and London. The villages have a small number of community facilities including a cafe, shop, pubs, churches and village halls.

¹Office for National Statistics Census 2021, accessed 20/06/23, https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/customprofiles/draw/

Structure

This report is structured in four sections: **Art, People, Place, Organisation**. Each section comprises a series of statements summarising a finding of this evaluation, backed by evidence, data and quotes. The sections conclude with recommendations.

Methodology

This evaluation adopts a mixed and adaptive methodology. The data was collected using a variety of methods, drawn from a range of stakeholders: audiences, artists, team, committee, partners and venues.

Evidence was gathered through: audience feedback cards available from all venues during the festival (138 cards were submitted); surveys sent to artists, supporters, and volunteers immediately following the festival; emailed and in-person feedback provided by a range of partners, visitors and the local committee; website analytics; social media analytics and engagement; documentation photographs and video, and discussions among the festival team and committee.

This report aspires to the principles laid out in UK Evaluation Society's Guidelines for Good Practice in Evaluation: Clarity, Integrity, Independence, Accessibility, Trust, Equity, Transparency, Diversity.

Terminology

- Team: Simon Lee Dicker, Chantelle Henocq, Cat Bagg, Susie Clark, Andy Parker, Katie Platt.
- Artists: all exhibiting artists at Od Arts Festival.
- Advisory Group: A group of seven local volunteers for Od Arts Festival.
- Co-Curators: Simon Lee Dicker & Cat Bagg.
- Co-Selectors: Primary, Airspace Gallery, Hogchester Arts, CAMP, More Than Ponies, Extra Ordinary People, Spike Island Associates.
- Community Clay: A long-term project inviting people in the community to learn new skills and enjoy making together with clay at OSR Projects.
- Cycling Without Age (CWA): A non-profit global initiative. Volunteer pilots take people out on free 'trishaw' cycle rides, targeted at older people and those with mobility difficulties. Trishaws are three-wheel electrical power assisted cycles with a passenger cab in the front.
- Into another intensity: The title of the Seminar that preceded Od Arts Festival 2023.
- Online Programme: A series of artists' films, audio works and a recorded Zoom presentation that was available on OdArtsFestival.co.uk from 26 May - 4 June 2023.
- Participants: People who took part in any planned activity related to Od Arts Festival 2023.
- Seminar: A day of illustrated lectures, Zoom presentations and workshops, located at OSR Projects and Dawe's Twineworks on 22 April 2023.
- Still and still moving: The title of Od Arts Festival 2023.
- Supporting Partners: Organisations that support the festival typically through hosting exhibitions and events.
- Volunteers: people who took part in Od Arts Festival, stewarding exhibition venues and welcoming visitors.



About the author

This report has been commissioned by OSR
Projects and is compiled and written by Susie Clark,
whose experience spans 20+ years of working
with contemporary art. Educated at Norwich
School of Art and Goldsmiths College, Susie has
worked in various roles across public contemporary
art galleries including Norwich Gallery / EAST
international, Aspex Gallery, Portsmouth and
South London Gallery. She was Gallery Manager
at commercial galleries Kate MacGarry and Sprüth
Magers in London, and continues to work as Curator
of a private art collection based in London and The
Netherlands. Susie lives in Frome, Somerset.



Festival by numbers

| 37 | artists were involved | 35 | local volunteers |
|-------|---------------------------------------|------|---|
| 2,695 | live visits (approx 1000 visitors) | 47 | online talk attendees |
| 145 | pre festival workshop participants | 36 | campers |
| 2500 | programmes printed and distributed | 212 | school children visited the festival |
| 9 | art venues | 769 | people took part in festival events |
| 244 | days of work | 63% | first-time visitors |
| 2153 | website visitors | 100% | seminar attendees learnt something new |
| 6307 | Instagram interactions | 40% | increase Instagram followers |
| 3 | radio interviews | 60% | people who came to see something different |



1. Art

1.1 Selecting art and artists - the curatorial process

Initial concepts for the theme of the 2023 festival were developed by Simon Lee Dicker during the funding application process and subsequently developed with Cat Bagg when commissioned as co-curator.

In response to learnings from previous festivals the selection of art and artists focused on developing a programme of work (exhibitions/events/workshops) jointly selected by the co-curators. This included both curators researching and making nominations that were discussed and selected in relation to the theme and working with 7 UK-based, arts organisations (Co-Selectors) to each nominate an artist to present their work at *Still and still moving*.

This strand of the festival built on previous festivals work with South West based arts organisations and expanded the geographic spread by working with co-selectors from across England. This gave the co-selectors the opportunity to support its network of artists through the nomination and paid exhibition opportunity. One co-selector was invited to present at the pre-festival seminar with others attending the festival in May 2023.

Becoming Geologic (Third Form), Ella West - Coker Court Photograph Katy Docking





'Owlers Cloak', Sara Trillo Co -selected by Extra Ordinary people at eastside projects - Photograph Katy Docking

1.2 Into Another Intensity - one day seminar providing a critical framework for the festival

Od Arts Festival is ambitious in its aim to develop new artist commissions and present a greater breadth of socially-engaged work. With a proven track record of successful seminars dating back to 2015, OSR Projects programmed a day of talks and activities titled *Into another intensity* (also from T.S. Eliot's poem 'East Coker') to take place a month before the festival opened. This seminar of illustrated lectures, Zoom presentations and workshops, located at OSR Projects and Dawe's Twineworks, provided a critical framework for the festival.

Aimed at artists, curators, cultural producers and writers, the presentations and workshops invited participants to consider how art can open up new encounters with, and ways of thinking about rural places in the context of an ever more interconnected world. Of the seminar's five speakers and workshop leaders, two were artists also exhibiting at the festival, one was a co-selector from a partner arts organistion and several exhibiting festival artists attended as seminar participants. **46 people** in total took part in the one day seminar.

One of the presentations was adapted to take place over Zoom rather than in-person, due to the speaker contracting Covid-19. A positive outcome of this was the recorded presentation being included as part of the 'online festival programme', reinforcing the connection between the seminar and the festival, and citing the outcomes of the festival within a contemporary academic framework:

'I never go to events and I'm really glad I went to this one. It was well organised and the food was lovely. I made some really nice connections with people on the walk and I will now look at the landscape in a completely different way, even though I have grown up in it.' Seminar participant



Dan Guthrie guest speaker for the one day seminar -Photograph Katy Docking

'A very engrossing day overall and setting a high intellectual bar which showed a respect to audience and speakers and a desire to truly develop knowledge and share understanding. The speakers were well chosen and on the whole to an incredible standard and OSR hosted the large group with a thoughtfulness and care that left me feeling like my individual presence mattered and that as a group we were doing something important.'

In a post-Seminar survey, participants rated the following:

100% agreed that they had learned something new

90% agreed that the topics felt relevant

100% agreed that the speakers were well-selected

100% agreed that they will take what they've learned into their future practice

90% agreed that they understood the ethos of OSR projects



1.3 Exploring contemporary art; the festival and its audience

The Festival took place from Friday to Sunday, the weekend of the late May Bank Holiday. During this time over **2,695** visits to the exhibitions, films and performances were recorded.

Over the three day period, **769** people in total took part in:

- A procession of plants with Marcia Teusink, school children and visitors
- Plant exchanges each day at Dawe's Twineworks
- A live reading by Eleanor Duffin in St Michael and All Angels church
- 2 Performances by Clare Whistler in response to Nicola Turner's sculptural installations
- 3 Bookbinding workshops with Caitlin Akers
- A Community yoga practice session with Lisa Bartlett
- 2 Sculptural Circle Workshops with Tom Sewell
- 2 Drawing from and with plants workshops with Marcia Teusink
- 2 Guided walks through Holloways (sunken lanes) with Sara Trillo
- A Clay Talisman-making workshop with OSR Projects Young Potters
- A Performance by Seaweed in the Fruit Locker LGBTQIA+ sea shanty choir
- A Village Hall Silent Disco featuring a specially commissioned playlist by Uganda-based DJ Decay aka Cardi Monáe



Silent Disco - Photograph Katy Docking

60% of visitors who completed feedback forms 'came to experience something different':

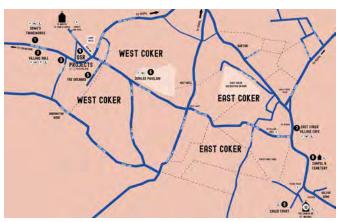
'Thank you, we loved it all. Magical villages with interventions of art in unexpected places. I loved coker court and the installations. What a thought provoking intriguing experience. I'm feeling inspired' Visitor

The festival built upon solid foundations established by previous Od Arts Festivals and attracted audiences of local, new and returning visitors. Experiencing contemporary art and a wide range of participatory activities across 10 sites between the two villages, visitors widely reported friendly welcomes from the volunteers and festival team, in relaxed environments where they felt peaceful and calm.

There was a general sense from visitors that the scale of the festival was just right, not overwhelmingly large:

'I loved all of it, the people have been so welcoming. The venues are spectacular. Everything is walking distance. So many interesting pieces of site responsive work. It has been restorative. Thank you' Visitor

It was noted by a few visitors that a 'slightly more in-scale map' would have been beneficial to visitors unfamiliar with the area. People who had explored the footpaths during the festival were keen to share their newly-discovered knowledge by annotating the brochure map, or giving verbal directions to others, which generated a feeling of solidarity and generosity.



Volunteers felt supported by the festival team and empowered by the information provided; meeting some of the artists was helpful, and they were not daunted by talking about contemporary art:

'Most people got around rather easily, the brochure was very helpful. I used it as a tool when people had questions about the art, as well as a tool for learning a bit more about the artists. Visitors found that very organised and helpful' Volunteer feedback

'Was nice to converse with the artists as well. Really enjoyed meeting people who share a love for the arts.' Volunteer feedback The high quality of the artwork was communicated by artists, visitors, volunteers and participants alike.

'It's such a great event for the artists, the visitors and the local community. For me, being from London, I found it to be a great opportunity to meet artists, arts programmers and interested art-goers from the greater Somerset area. High level or artistic production in an amazing rural setting - quite an unusual experience.'

Artist

'I met people who said they were so thrilled to see such a high standard of art and exhibition quality and that it gave them renewed belief that the South West can deliver such engaging programming and events.' Artist



Volunteers, Marcia Teusinks 'Plant Exchange' Dawe's Twineworks - Photograph Katy Docking

1.4 A new context for artists; artists and their wider networks

Od Arts Festival provides a unique opportunity for artists to develop their work in previously unexplored areas. Positive outcomes from this include new site-responsive work developed by Marcia Teusink, Sara Trillo, Caitlin Akers, Tom Sewell, Nicola Turner & Clare Whistler, Laura Hopes, Owen Lloyd & Eleanor Duffin.

Writer, Jack Young was commissioned to create a new piece of writing in response to the festival. He created a poem that explores the local landscape, its people and histories in. Developed through a critical and poetic response to T.S. Eliot's Four Quartets (from which the festival takes its name), the commissioned work explores the poem's history, ideas and complications. The resulting writing has been developed into a printed publication - a new venture to increase the legacy and reach for the festival.

When asked in a post-festival survey to rate the importance of the following statements, artists responded positively:

100% It brought my work to a new audience

93% It will have a long term impact on my future work

85% It made me see or understand my work in a new light

85% It provided an opportunity to work in a sitespecific way

78% It enabled me to reimagine my work for a rural context

Artists were asked; What didn't work for you, or could be improved or developed? 80% responded with 'nothing' and the remainder offered suggestions including: more signage, more transport and food options, and more artworks along the walking routes.

Growing networks was a high priority: 100% of artists surveyed agreed that it was important or very important that the festival created a space to meet other artists and develop my network. Having met new people at the festival informally, several artists expressed their desire to cultivate this in a more

structured format before, during or after the festival:

'Everything was great. One idea - it would have been nice to meet audiences more directly whilst I was there - particularly the scouts/cricketers whose space I was using.' Artist

'Would love a follow up seminar day as the April one was fab' Artist

However, artists were sympathetic to the organisers' and their own capacity to add more into a weekend of busy activity:

'The way the festival was so spread in different clusters it was easy to miss people who came to look round, not sure if there is a solution to that. There were some people I'd have loved a conversation with.' Artist



A grounding installation, St Michaels Church -Photograph Katy Docking



1.5 Artists' experiences of the festival

37 Artists were involved with Od Arts Festival, creating newly commissioned work, adapting and presenting existing work, or contributing as filmmakers, writers, photographers and DJs. In the post-festival survey, participating artists unanimously expressed that their involvement in Od Arts Festival made them feel valued, welcomed and cared for, and rated it as very important.

Artists valued the opportunity for paid employment through leading workshops and guided walks, in addition to an exhibition fee, which all artists received:

'It was great to feel appropriately remunerated for my work, all too often there's no money or not enough, so being paid properly made me feel valued and really invested in the festival.' Artist

They acknowledged and appreciated the festival team's excellent level of expertise:

'Logistics, tech and comms were all excellent. In particular I respected the quality of attention and care the festival team gave - helping me realise the work to the highest level in an unusual/untested venue. They were also wonderfully cheerful in what was clearly sometimes stressful circumstances!' Artist





Circle Workshops with Tom Sewell - Photograph Katy Docking

1.6 Towards a healthy arts ecology; how the festival nurtures a wide range of voices within the broad spectrum of contemporary artistic practice

The festival embraced and nurtured a diverse range of artistic careers, facilitating meaningful exchanges between established, internationally-renowned, mid-career and emerging artists:

'I appreciated being included in such a high calibre of artists. The standard of the graphics inc website, labels at each site, the organisation of the festival as a whole, the great events, fees, cohesive curation made it all feel so together and of a standard of festival I was so proud to be part of.' Artist

Supporting artists to make and present work that involves audiences as active participants is at the core of OSR Projects' ethos. Day one of the festival was devoted to exhibition visits and creative workshops for pupils from four local schools and one further education college. The significance of their creative growth through taking part emerged via the positive feedback from both young people and their teachers:

'... it is exciting, educational and thought provoking, allowing children exposure to national/international art and artists but in a setting which is local to them.' Teacher

Encouraging young people to engage and co-create with professional artists is mutually beneficial; one of the exhibiting artists ran a sculpture workshop with school children for the first time:

'My workshops were such a joy to do, I loved watching the participants create amazing things' Artist Continuing OSR Projects' aims of nurturing and advocating for the role of artists in society, the team invited Spike Island Associates, one of the co-Selector organisations, to bring a group of their members to Od Arts Festival. Members form a network of artists, curators, designers, writers and producers at all stages of their careers.

The festival also provided paid work for an emerging local photographer and an artist/cultural producer at the beginning of their careers.







1 - Learning and recommendations

- The one day seminar worked well to situate the festival within a deeper critical framework. Several artists mentioned the possibility of a post-festival follow-up seminar; this could be a more informal event, primarily focused on networking as opposed to presentations, and directed by participating artists, to redirect some of the workload from the festival team.
- The final workshop at the festival from 2-3pm on Sunday was not well attended; there was a sense that visitors were seizing their last opportunity to see the artworks before the festival ended at 5:30pm. By contrast the Sea Shanty Choir performance at lunchtime on Sunday was very well attended. For future festivals, focus on programming events for the morning on the final day, and offer one workshop rather than duplicating the same workshop on two days.
- The brochure was very helpful for information about artworks but the map would be improved with an indication of walking times.
- Highlight the disclaimer that artworks may move in print and online.



Book binding schools workshop Dawe's Twineworks with Caitlin Akers - Photograph Katy Docking



2. People

2.1 Experiencing contemporary art; how did people respond to the art at the festival?

Experiencing contemporary art at Od Arts Festival evoked a variety of emotions and responses in people; the desire to 'experience something different' was expressed by 60% of visitors who completed feedback cards

Volunteers experienced and observed a range of positive responses to the work:

'Idea with talismans ...I loved how people where excited to show or see what piece of art you have in a pocket. Also it is nice souvenir. I was happy to listen to the good feedback from people and how pleasingly surprised they were to discover such amazing places'. Volunteer

42% of visitors said their experience at the festival was an opportunity 'to reflect and think', while 12% visited 'to support my mental health'. The volunteers found the relaxed nature of the festival beneficial too:

'Managing to relax, enjoy new surroundings, meeting new people. Loved the Cuckoo Hide in the beautiful meadow setting and seeing how appreciative of the artwork people were.' Volunteer

23% of visitors came 'to do something with my family':

'Watching my grandchildren enjoying the events, especially the singing was a highlight' Visitor

'To Learn something' was a priority for 34% of visitors surveyed, and 15% had a desire' to create something':





Marica Teusinks drawing workshop - Photograph Katy Docking

2.2 A contextualised experience; how people connected art to personal, political and ecological issues

At the Seminar, Dr Rosemary Shirley presented elements of her research into how rural places are imagined and represented in contemporary and historical art:

'It was great to be able to share my new work on the visibility/invisibility of the rural labour/infrastructure/mega warehouses at this brilliant event' Dr Rosemary Shirley (on Instagram)

Continuing a theme from the seminar, several of the festival artworks disrupted and questioned traditional notions of the countryside as a rural idyll.

Some had powerful responses to this:

'The violence of the english countryside, the silent beauty of the english countryside, happening at the same time is revealing and unsettling' Visitor Artists valued seeing the work's ability to transmit political and socio-ecological ideas to new audiences, as much as visitors valued experiencing it.

Volunteers enjoyed the unique insight that they gained from actively taking part in the festival and having the opportunity to talk to some of the artists whose work they were spending time with:

'I especially enjoyed Marcia Teusink's work, and also seeing the end of Tom Sewell's workshop in The Orchard alongside Laura Hopes's installation. The films in the village hall I found quite moving, and Sara Trillo's talismans were a wonderful idea. All of this stimulated interesting conversations with visitors and other volunteers + artists alike.' Volunteer

'[a highlight was] watching Jennet Thomas' film surrounded by non-traditional arts audiences in the pavilion, roaring with laughter but totally getting it' Artist



Jennet Thomas, Film' The Great Curdling' in the Jubilee Pavillion - Photograph Katy Docking



2.3 Young at art; what was the quality of experience for younger people?

School children participated in Od Arts Festival, with many taking part in multiple activities. This included pre-festival ceramic workshops run by Simon Lee Dicker and Chantlle Henocq, taking part in Flo(ra) tilla: A Procession of plants, with Marcia Teusink, visiting exhibitions and installations on the first day of the festival, sculpture circle workshops with Tom Sewell in The Orchard and bookbinding workshops with Caitlin Akers at Dawe's Twineworks. In response to these activities teachers were asked:

What worked for you?

'Watching kids teach adults and invent ways of solving problems that they encountered. The venue was perfect for a workshop in terms of setting, atmosphere and functionality. The whole festival was awesome' Teacher feedback, year 7 pupils

A few weeks before the festival, children from Perrott Hill School, East Coker Primary and West Coker Primary took part in clay Talisman-making workshops, inspired by Sara Trillo's Talisman work and led by Simon Lee Dicker. Responding to informal feedback from pupils after the workshops, a Year 5 & 6 Teacher reported:

What was different about working in an artist studio compared to working in your school classroom?

'The pupils loved the studio space with its inspiration, adult to child ratio and sense of calmness in comparison to the classroom, which often feels crowded, noisy, rushed and short of resources.'

How did working with clay make you feel? What was your best bit about working with clay?

'Even though the tasks were structured they felt they had freedom over the design. They felt calm working with the clay and its forgiving nature, which meant mistakes didn't matter and wonky was good. They particularly liked using the wheel'

As a direct result of these workshops, a group of eight Year 7 students, their art teacher and Levi Dicker (former Perrott Hill student and founder of Community Clay) formed OSR Projects Young Potters and went on to lead a Talisman-making workshop for members of the public during the festival, which 32 people attended.

How did being part of a 'young potters group' make you feel?

'They felt privileged to have been chosen, enjoyed socialising with pupils from other classes and felt a real sense of being part of a little team.' Teacher

The legacy of Od Arts Festival's work with young people since 2018 is evident within the community: passing by The Pound, the location of Nicola Turner's installation, a group of Scouts were pondering the work - one of them asked Simon Lee Dicker:

'Is it natural or is it sculpted?'

Inquisitive questions like this reinforce contemporary art's ability to encourage active engagement with and questioning of surroundings.



'Ecohed Ecstasy' in The Pound - Photograph Katy Docking



2.4 A new discovery: how many people attended and where did they come from?

In 2021 the number of first-time in-person visits to Od Arts Festival was 73%; this year the figure was lower at 63%. This could indicate that audiences are returning. Of those first time visitors, 60% had postcodes from the South West region.

6 weeks before the festival and 4 days after the online programme ended, the festival website Odartsfestival.co.uk received **2,153** unique users; a **133%** increase on the previous 30 days, and an **8% increase** on 2021's online attendance figures of 1,994 unique users.

67% of the online visits were **new visitors**, with the majority visiting from the UK (75%), followed by the US (22%), Australia, France, Italy, Norway, Germany, Netherlands and Poland. [Source: Google Analytics/ Wordpress ExactMetrics]

The first two Od Arts Festivals drew in a considerable number of visitors who were not frequent arts attenders. This year's festival has witnessed a noticeable rise in the number of visitors who identify themselves as frequent arts attenders, as compared to previous years:

65% of visitors frequently attend exhibitions/art events vs 27% in 2021 [45% based in the South West]

30% visit exhibitions/art events a few times a year vs 60% in 2021
[21% based in the SW]

5% rarely or never visit exhibitions/art events vs 13% in 2021 [3% based in SW] Factors that may have contributed to this increase:

- The 2021 festival took place under Covid-19 pandemic restrictions, so promotion was concentrated on the local community. Visitors from further afield such as Bristol and London (places with larger numbers of arts attenders) were actively discouraged from attending. With restrictions lifted, wider marketing has resumed and the visitor demographic has shifted.
- Pandemic restrictions may have affected the way visitors previously described themselves: they had not been able to make cultural visits so considered themselves infrequent arts attenders.
- OSR Projects' exemplary community engagement has led to a shift in visitors' perception of themselves as arts attenders; their engagement validates their experience.
- OSR Projects' reputation has grown significantly across the South West and beyond, bringing regular arts attenders from further afield.

Bringing 10 artists into the festival via the coselectors (organisations based beyond the South West) in turn brought audiences from a wider geographic area. Visitors travelled from Preston, Warrington and Stoke in the North of England; from Margate in the East; from London, Brighton, Portsmouth, Cardiff and Gloucestershire, and Cornwall.

2.5 A distant engagement; valuing the online offer as well as the in-person programme

There were two live-streamed artist talks with a Q&A session by Bedwyr Williams on Tuesday 30th May and Jennet Thomas on Thursday 1st June. Tickets were free and bookable in advance, 30 people attended Bedwyr Williams' talk, and 17 attended Jennet Thomas' talk.

The Online Programme featured 5 Artists' films and 2 audio works available to stream at any time between 26th May - 4th June. During this period there were 99 views of the Artists' films/audio works by 20 unique viewers. [source: Vimeo Analytics] The most viewed film was Stine Gonsolt and Åse Løvgren's 'The Valley', followed by Laura Hopes' audio work 'Cuckoo', Jennet Thomas' 'Animal Condensed >> Animal Expanded #1' and Dr Rosemary Shirley's online lecture from the Seminar 'Landscapes, Aesthetics, and the Rural Mega Warehouse'. The majority of activity occurred the day after the in-person festival finished: Monday 29 May, a Bank Holiday.

The previous evaluation report suggested that an online programme could be generative in the future, even after pandemic restrictions are completely erased. These pandemic restrictions meant that a greater portion of the 2021 Festival's events occurred online, thereby skewing any comparisons with this year's activities, that were unrestricted. It is encouraging to note that the 20 unique online viewers and 99 views indicates that each online visitor viewed almost all of the online artworks.



Screen shot of online programme talk with artist Bedwyr Williams

2 - Learning and Recommendations

• Participatory activity continues to play a vital role in the festival; evidence gathered from teaching staff shows that young people are taking the skills and language learned through their experiences of contemporary art within formal education settings and using it to explore other areas of their lives.

'Art makes the world a better place, every lesson has art in it really and it helps with other subjects, relaxation and wellbeing.' Year 5 & 6 students, East Coker Primary School

- Capturing the full spectrum of in-person attendance data proved challenging; analysis is based on a limited number of feedback cards. Responses from younger age brackets (16-19, 20-24) did not feature on the cards, so in order to extend the scope, research into new methods of collecting data such as combined digital/analogue would be beneficial.
- 27% of visitors said they would like to get more involved or join the festival advisory group.



Sea Shantiy Choir, Dawe's Twineworks - Photograph Katy Docking



3. Place

3.1 No place like home; the festival is embedded, connected and responsive

Od Arts Festival is embedded in the community: connected, responsive and respectful of its relationships, which in turn is transmitted to artists, visitors and Volunteers:

'...there was a really exciting dialogue between the local community and the international network of artists who took part, and it balanced the site-specific nature of the festival with a wider political lens into how art-making can be a vital part of rural community-building' Artist

The supporting partners who took part in Od Arts Festival were asked; How valuable was your opportunity to host a project or work with Od Arts Festival? 100% of respondents reported that they enjoyed being involved with arts and cultural activities, and agreed that it provided them with an opportunity to be involved with the local community. All of the respondents said they would like to work with Od Arts Festival again:

'Yes, because you are a pleasure to work with and we love the event itself' Supporting Partners



John Burton Signs team

3.2 A catalyst for growth; fostering partnerships while contributing to the local economy.

The festival made significant contributions to the local economy via mutually beneficial partnerships with organisations and individuals based in East and West Coker:

2 cafes [Village Cafe E.Coker / Twineworks]

2 pubs

Air bnb's /Accomodation

1 Church

1 Chapel

1 private residence

1 heritage venue/museum

2 local landowners

1 signage printing company in East Coker

The festival also employed the services of a freelance art technician, a communications manager and evaluator, mobile caterers, screen printers and brochure printers all based within Somerset, Dorset and Cornwall. Additionally AV equipment was hired from arts organisations in Bristol and Cornwall.

In response to the question; Did your organisation have increased sales during the festival? The Village Cafe in East Coker reported 'Yes, probably a 50% increase on Friday & Saturday and 100% on Sunday as I'm not usually open'

Local suppliers appreciated the exposure for their businesses on Od Arts Festival's social media channels. In a series of posts on Instagram and Facebook, each business was introduced as a key partner, with portraits of the individuals involved. Reporting on informal feedback, Chantelle Henocq, OSR Projects Co-Director said: 'The suppliers liked having a face put to their business, and liked that we really appreciate all the areas that help and are required to get the festival up and running.'

3.3 Getting around; how visitors arrived, navigated and stayed in the Cokers

East and West Coker are served by irregular bus services, and the nearest train station is in Yeovil, 3½ miles away. As such 60% of visitors to Od Arts Festival came by car, compared to 6% on public transport. A small percentage of visitors commented that more signage could have improved their experience:

'more signage around village for non-locals' Visitor

Funds were allocated to cover the expenses of renting a minibus for the purpose of transporting the group of Spike Island Associates (1 of the 7 Co-Selector organisations) from Bristol to the Festival. The logistical aspects associated with travelling via public transport are prohibitively complex, expensive, and ultimately discouraging, and it was felt this investment opened up the opportunity to a new network of arts professionals.

In 2021, Od Arts Festival had a shuttle bus to transport visitors between the 2 villages; it had been effective but was not well used due to the good weather and reduced numbers of visitors from further afield. This year a more environmentally efficient mode of transport was employed in the form of 2 electrically-assisted Trishaws, from Portland-based *Cycling Without Age*. Each Trishaw could accommodate 2 passengers, with priority given to those with reduced mobility and children.

'I thought the tri-shaw rides between venues was a great idea and people seem to love it!' Volunteer

'Just wanted to say how much we enjoyed the visit; the work, the settings, the helpful & friendly invigilators . And #omg the tri-shaw. Such fun, such an overlooked element & the 2 people who cycled us & chatted were the BEST- they made my day & I'd be so grateful if you passed this on to them. It felt like an integral part of the festival.' Visitor

20% of visitors surveyed walked to Od Arts Festival; and this was an integral part of their enjoyment of the festival:

'Fun to see something different, spend time out walking and see parts of the villages not seen before.' Visitor

Visitors who navigated the roads on foot rather than using the longer signposted off-road routes said that avoiding them could have improved their experience, but it did not affect their overall enjoyment.

Local affordable accommodation is limited, so a recommendation from the first Od Arts Festival had been to set up a temporary campsite for visitors, Volunteers and Artists. Pandemic restrictions during the 2021 Festival caused the campsite to be cancelled, and visitors were encouraged to make single day trips.

This year, the inaugural Nearly Wild Camping site was set up in West Coker; under a 10 minute walk to the festival hub, and costing £5 per person per night (free for under 16s). 36 people stayed, and campers reported it as a positive experience, adding an incentive to spend longer at the festival without incurring high accommodation costs:

'We really enjoyed the camping, it was in the most perfect paddock - an element of the festival would've worked well there, like Tom's Sculptural Circle. If we'd known how good it was we'd have brought all the kids and taken it in turns to go round and see the artwork while the kids hung out at the campsite' Visitor



3.4 An open door; accessibility and the idiosyncrasies of rural sites

Experiencing artworks in sites that have little or no public access under usual circumstances was a highlight for many people at Od Arts Festival:

'The work was fabulous and conversations around the various venues was inspiring. I was particularly overwhelmed by your careful and considered curation of works in non traditional venues which created particularly beautiful site responsive installations. This is not easy and was achieved by you all with elegance and cohesion.' Artist

The team were mindful of the accessibility challenges presented by each venue, yet rural settings can give rise to technical issues that are inherent in their geographic location, such as inconsistent broadband connections, which were a problem during the seminar.

The sound level in the Old School Room (OSR) an old building with a very high ceiling - posed a problem when lots of people were present:

'2 or 3 people, myself included, revealed they can get quite anxious and inhibited at large events. I wondered if somehow this could be acknowledged and may be taken into account in future events. The hall is absolutely beautiful but the acoustics are quite tricky and when people are all talking it can get quite overwhelming for a few of us.' Seminar participant



Cycling Without Age trishaws - Photograph Katy Docking

3 - Learning and recommendations:

- Feedback was overwhelmingly positive in terms of generosity and the friendliness of the team and volunteers; 5.8% of visitors described themselves as disabled and several people felt at ease with sharing their needs, whether it was requesting a chair to sit on to watch a video work during the festival, or sitting to one side of the throng of participants in the seminar. Feedback suggests the team and volunteers are intuitively supporting visitors with additional needs and neurodiversity.
- Bringing Cycling Without Age to the festival was a resounding success for those that experienced the rides, but bookings were low, as people were encouraged to leave spaces for older people and those with limited mobility. Wider publicity that includes children in this category could help.
- Food and drink: The New Inn hosted artists but vegetarian/vegan food options were almost non-existent, and expensive. Informal feedback from the team to the pub owners could prove useful in influencing this. My Greek Fat Wraps food truck at Dawe's was very successful and not in direct competition with Dawe's tearoom as their offerings were significantly different. Additional food options in East Coker are needed, but the Team must be mindful of causing unwelcome competition to the Village Café, so prior consultation with the cafe owners is recommended. Where available, signs saying fill up with water here could be added to venues.
- Additional signs were needed for festival car parks and at artworks at Dawe's Twineworks, and a review of peripheral signage directing people to both of the villages would be useful.
- Look at working with footpath officers on both Parish Councils and have walking maps supplied.

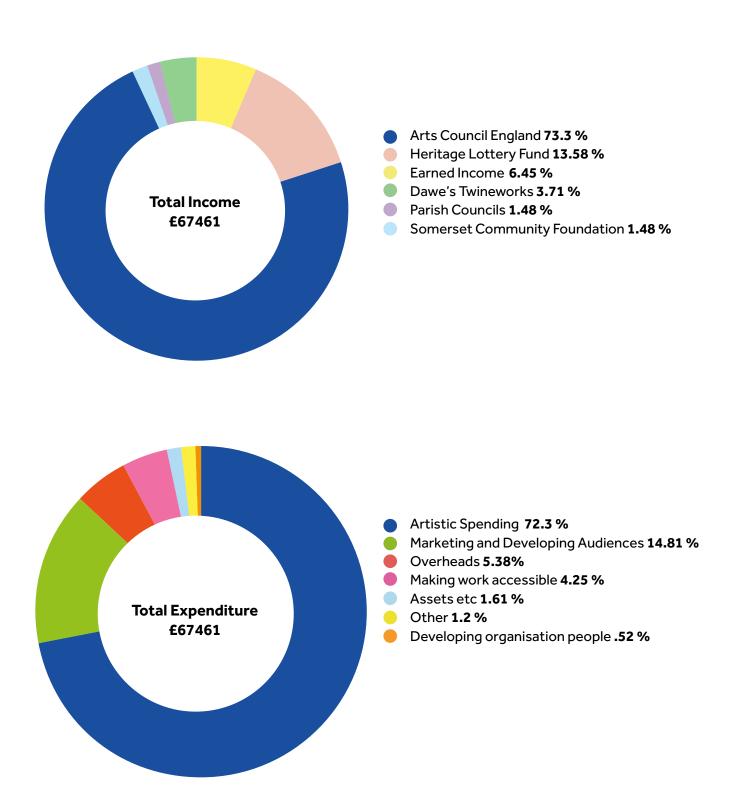


Sara Trillo's walk - Photograph Katy Docking



4. Organisation

4.1 Festival income and expenditure



4.2 Building a resilient organisation; how diversity of funding enabled ambitious programming to combine contemporary art with heritage

For the first time, Od Arts Festival was awarded a grant from Heritage Lottery Fund which facilitated a new direction in programming resulting in heritage focused commissions, and a greater variety of participatory opportunities.

The award enabled Od Arts Festival to build on its successful partnership with Dawe's Twineworks, including commissioning a new artwork by Marcia Teusink. The installation at Dawe's Twineworks offered insight into aspects of 18th and 19th century global trade and exploration, in relation to the twine and sail cloth industries in the area. Through investigating the historical movement of plants, the work touches upon the wonder of the range of plant species in the world and the problematic ecological effects of their unnatural redistribution:

'Seeing artworks specific to the history of the villages and the site of the Twineworks was especially exciting, as well as conversations with Volunteers who keep the place alive. Loved it!' - Visitor

The commission brought a wider and younger audience to Dawe's Twineworks museum, and explored new perspectives on its relationship to our global and colonial past via contemporary artworks.

4.3Od Arts Festival and the future cultural life of Somerset and beyond

Od Arts Festival provides a space for socially relevant and critically engaged dialogue, where marginalised voices are brought to the fore with sensitivity:

'The Seminar fulfilled more of my ongoing desires of bringing together more diverse groups to talk about agriculture, farming, nature and art - it reinforced that art spaces are also the right forum for this discussion. I've driven across the country to be part of it!' Seminar workshop leader / Artist & Farmer

A trio of moving image works showcased in the Village Hall by Ufuoma Essi, Dan Guthrie and Arjuna Neuman explored representations of the English rural landscape: exposing the inequalities in accessing rural land experienced by people of different races and ethnicities. Visitors welcomed the diverse perspectives portrayed here, and across the festival:

'[A highlight was] Dan Guthrie's film 'Black Strangers', it was very moving and thought provoking.' Visitor

'Really liked [Ufuoma Essi's] pastoral malaise, great venue' Visitor





Ufuoma Essi, 'Pastoral malaise' film in the Village Hall - Photograph Katy Docking

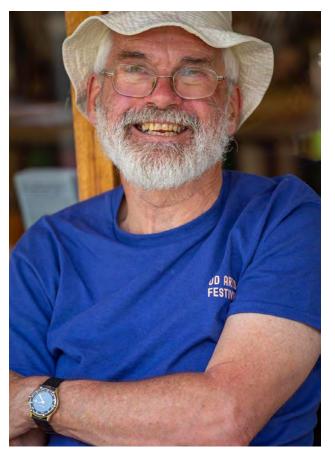
Seaweed in the Fruit Locker, an LGBTQIA+ sea shanty choir, explore queer motifs within seafaring history, and collective performance in marginalised communities through the tradition of shanty singing. Using their lived experience to rework existing shanties and inspire new ones, they continue the tradition of hybrid folk songs being adapted time and again through generations and across cultures. Their performance on Sunday afternoon was a highlight for many:

"...Sea Shanties 'Visitor

'...this is one of the most welcoming, inclusive events I have attended. The level of local support and engagement in terms of community spaces, people and ethos made it a truly unique event.' Artist

4.4 Creative ambassadors; the volunteer programme was a vital, enriching experience

'We received such a warm and cheery welcome from the Volunteers at each venue and so helpful. You were all awesome' Visitor



Volunteer - Photograph Pauline Burr

Volunteers play a vital role at Od Arts Festival: a team of 25 people, aged from 15 to 90, were recruited to steward the festival and help visitors to access and interpret the artworks. 2 months before the festival, volunteers were invited to attend an induction day at Dawe's Twineworks, consisting of an introduction by the Co-Curators, a special preview of Festival artworks and a talk by Marcia Teusink, Dawe's commissioned artist. This was followed by lunch provided by the Twineworks volunteers, festival team and committee members. Volunteers who were unable to attend received an email induction, and the venue information packs were provided so that they did not miss out on vital information.

The information packs were designed to be inclusive and friendly, embodying the tone that the team aimed to instil in the volunteers for their communication with visitors.

The volunteers were highly impressed by the overall organisation, especially logistical aspects such as the rota, where 25 individuals were assigned to more than one 2.5-hour shift across 9 venues over 3 days:

'Your organisation behind this event, by Chantelle and her team. I can't say that I have ever seen such expertise.' Volunteer

In a post-event email survey, volunteers were asked to rate the team's communication between excellent / good / poor - 94% rated it 'excellent' with the remaining 6% 'good'. All volunteers said they felt well looked after by the team, and that the 'Volunteers WhatsApp group' was invaluable for communicating:

'The WhatsApp volunteers group fantastic communication and almost instant support from the team if there were any problems. Never felt alone - pop in visits from Simon were nice. Bags with the info in at each venue were brilliant water was much appreciated. Information at venues was fantastic.' Volunteer Volunteers loved their T Shirts, really appreciated the free lunches at the weekend and complimentary tickets to the Silent Disco on Saturday evening:

'Silent Disco! But all of it, I thoroughly enjoyed! Great vibes. And everyone was super lovely and friendly.' Volunteer

Three volunteers were unable to attend due to illness, resulting in an increase in shifts for the other volunteers; for some the shifts were 7.5 hours long. Feedback indicated that although sympathetic to the situation, this was too long and volunteers would have preferred a maximum of 5 hours or 2 shifts back-to-back, to avoid missing out on participating in workshops, or seeing other areas of the festival:

Volunteers were very receptive to the audience's needs, flagging up areas for improvement that included minor adjustments such as: needing a sign to alert visitors to the presence of ticks in The Orchard; not handing out evaluation cards in The Orchard because the atmosphere was 'very chilled' and 'it didn't feel right'.

The festival team were indebted to the support from Volunteers; Chantelle Henocq, Od Arts Festival Volunteer Coordinator and OSR Projects Co-Director reported:

'What an amazing crew of Volunteers, the feedback from them and their support has been a key part of running the festival. I'm pleased to hear that communication was reported to be good from most volunteers. Feedback from some festival visitors was all positive; saying how welcoming the volunteers were. If we do it again we know that we need a few more volunteers overall and more at certain busier venues.'





Volunteers - Photographs Pauline Burr



4.5 A generous invitation: people learned about Od Arts Festival from a variety of sources

31% of audiences who completed feedback cards found out about Od Arts Festival via its website. The greatest number of direct website referrals came from Linkin.Bio on the @OdArtsFest Instagram account, followed by Facebook, artrabbit and mailchimp (OSR Projects' e-newsletter mailer) [Source: Google Analytics/Wordpress ExactMetrics]. Online/e-newsletter mentions included CAST, VASW and artrabbit.

Instagram was the most active social media platform, with 6,307 accounts engaged in the 90 day period encompassing the festival, 4,991 of which were not @OdArtsFest followers. Total Instagram followers increased by 40% during this period. The top towns and cities reached were London, Bristol, Yeovil and Plymouth.

Katie Platts, Od Arts Festival production assistant, partnered with Dawe's Twineworks by taking over their fledgling Instagram account which led to a 217% increase in followers over the festival weekend.

Instagram particularly attracts creative users due to its visual nature and over 150 people shared images and stories of their experiences at the festival [source: Instagram Highlights]; Artists' feedback was very positive:

'I'm so chuffed with the way the work looked in both venues and I have had so many lovely messages from people on Instagram.' Artist

Among the surveyed visitors, only 15% indicated that they learned about the festival through word of mouth, marking a significant decrease from the previous festival where 51% of visitors relied on this form of communication. It should be noted that 40% of this year's surveyed visitors chose 'Other' as their means of discovering Od Arts Festival, with only a few stating what Other was: mailing list, village newsletter, my niece is exhibiting, etc.

Volunteers reported that several local visitors stumbled upon the festival while out walking.

'just came across the art festival by chance - but we have really appreciated the installations in the church and coker court -A really special experience' - Visitor

The printed marketing material primarily targeted publications with a distribution radius of 45 miles from the villages. These publications provided the most extensive coverage at a cost-effective price. The printed marketing included listings, paid advertisements, and short editorial pieces accompanied by images.

Publications and their circulation included: Evolver (50,000) Ropewalker Parish Magazine (1,020) The Leveller (10,000+) Circus (7,000)

2,500 copies of the Od Arts Festival brochure were printed; a portion were distributed within a 40 mile radius, with the majority freely available to visitors at the Festival. The distribution company had Od Arts Festival vinyl graphics on the back of their van to help with brand recognition as they delivered the brochures.

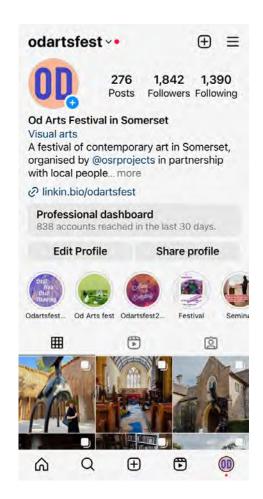


Will from Acoustic Distribution

A freelance Co-Communications Manager worked in tandem with Chantelle Henocq, to deliver Marketing & Communications, Press & PR. This was successful for social media marketing: as well as increasing @OdArtsFest followers by 40%, the number of unique Instagram users that saw the posts or stories ('reach') increased by 21% compared to the 2021 festival's Instagram reach, which had also included more Instagram Live events than this year.

3 Radio interviews took place, but none of the feedback received indicated that people had found out about the festival via the broadcasts.

National and arts press were difficult to engage; consultation with a freelance journalist for The Guardian and Times newspapers 8 weeks prior to the Festival revealed that lead times can be up to a year long. The team's previous experiences with arts press have relied heavily on established personal connections with art critics or photographers to garner coverage.





Will Cruickshank 'Plaster and thread works' at The Chapel Photograph Katy Docking

4.6 Reflecting on the future

After the festival, when asked: 'Do you think Od Arts Festival should happen again? If so, why?' artists responded unanimously 'yes':

'Yes! It was a really lovely festival and a very positive experience. From some random conversations with locals it is also clearly valued highly and nothing else like it is around.' Artist

'DEFINITELY! I met people who said they were so thrilled to see such a high standard of art and exhibition quality in the South west that it gave them renewed belief that the South West can deliver such engaging programming and events.' Artist

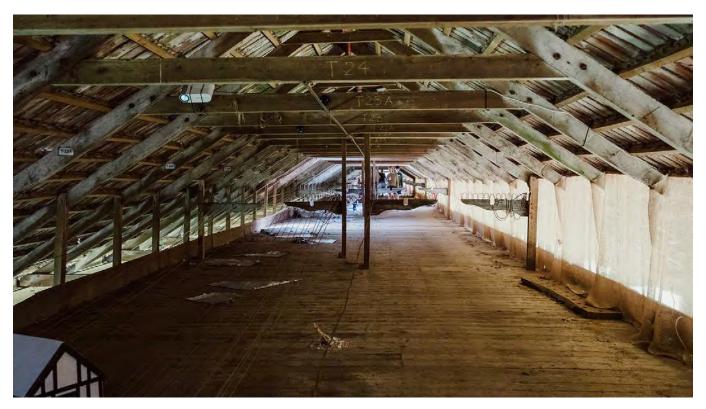
92.9% of Artists said it was *important* or *very important* to Invest in longer-term community collaborations or residencies. The same percentage said it was *important* or *very Important* to grow a national profile for the festival, indicating that there is keen interest in artists becoming more engaged with Od Arts Festival, and a desire to see it flourish beyond the South West.

Qualitative feedback overwhelmingly shows that the community is really invested in Od Arts Festival, they want the festival to continue to present contemporary art without compromise and do not necessarily want it to become a broader cultural experience:

'Thank you for giving us the opportunity to get involved. Maybe next time we could host an exhibit.' Village Cafe, East Coker

'Wonderful day yesterday at @odartsfest in Somerset. Amazing twine factory, music, art works to hunt out around the villages, workshops and food.... Having worked a lot in community gardens I find it so heartening to see communities functioning in such a warm and creative way. We need more things like this in the world....'
Frances Tophill, Gardeners World Presenter and festival visitor

Volunteer: 'Thank you so much for coming!' Nicholas Serota, Chair of Arts Council England: 'No - we must thank YOU for having us, it's been a wonderful experience!'



Marcia Teusink's 'Flo(ra)tilla: A Natural and not very natural history' upstairs in Dawe's Twineworks Photograph Katy Docking

4 - Learning and Recommendations:

- A volunteer who serves as both a member of the festival advisory group and a non-executive Director of OSR Projects was invaluable in identifying areas of improvement across areas of the festival schedule and staffing:
 - Finish times analyse visitor numbers at venues and see if the end times could be staggered to help with shut down
 - Possibly later closing Friday night and earlier on Sunday
 - Pavilion: shame about cricket game clash as quite noisy, hard to keep track on art visitors as they were coming in through the back door
 - Need 2 volunteers at The Chapel in case of toilet needs and a chance to view the art
 - Need at least 3 volunteers each shift at Dawe's Twineworks
- From the Learning and Recommendations in **Section 2: People**, there is work to be done to cultivate new volunteers; perhaps joining the Volunteer Committee could be a daunting prospect? Existing volunteers can be asked, and if that is a factor at play in preventing people from becoming more involved, a strategy needs to be devised to make this more appealing. Examining ways to harness existing volunteers' enthusiasm and keep momentum in between festivals, whilst not overwhelming the team or volunteers is essential.
- Press & Marketing: targeting National and Arts Press requires a longer lead time; personal connections should be explored and utilised. A post-festival team debrief looking at press strategy ideas would be beneficial.
- Social Media Marketing is very time consuming, bringing in a Co-Communications Manager helped but they estimated that an extra 3 days was spent solely on scheduling social media posts. Encouraging and involving Artists in the Social Media Strategy could help with reducing the time spent on it in-house. Clear guidelines must be established about when to share images and information, for example: asking Artists not to share images before the Festival has begun.
- It would be beneficial to identify clear categories where expertise is required and outsource to that.



Od team - Left to right Susie, Chantelle, Cat, Katie and Simon - Photograph Katy Docking



Thank you



Od Arts Festival is produced by OSR Projects. We are artist-run and welcome everyone.

Thank you to our host venues, and the people that run them, including: Dawe's Twineworks, West Coker Village Hall, The Orchard, Jubilee Pavillon, The Village Café, East Coker, Coker Court, The Cemetery Chapel and St Michael and All Angels' Church.

Thank you to our wonderful team of volunteers for being great ambassadors for the festival, Od Arts Festival advisory group: Ella, Alex, Ross, Katy, Tabatha, Daisy and Lilly.

OSR Projects directors Simon, Chantelle, Rowan, Bob, Sam, and Jo.

Andy for technical support, Susie for marketing comms, evaluation and Katy for production assistance.

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Thank you to the organisations that helped co-select artists: Primary, AirSpace Gallery, Hogchester Arts, CAMP, More Than Ponies, Extra Ordinary People, Spike Island Associates.

A special thanks to all the artists involved in this year's festival.













