

**Kathleen Soriano, Director and  
Sam Skillings, Marketing Manager, Compton Verney  
*Balancing Act***

Kathleen Soriano began her career at the Royal Academy of Arts before joining the National Portrait Gallery in 1989. In 1996 she became head of exhibitions and collections management and in 2004 was awarded one of the first Clore Leadership Programme Fellowships in which she worked at the South Bank Centre, London and the Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney. Her research project looked at Project Funding and its Impact on Core Function in art galleries. In February 2006 she became director at Compton Verney.

Sam Skillings has worked at Compton Verney since June 2004. She has had the challenge of building visitor numbers for a relatively new independent rural art gallery at the Grade 1 listed Robert Adam mansion. In 2006, she formulated the marketing campaign for the blockbuster Van Gogh exhibition, the year that the gallery won Enjoy England's Visitor Attraction of the Year award. Previously she has worked for Kings Lynn and West Norfolk Borough Council and Arts Marketing East as well as the History of Advertising Trust and The Theatre Chipping Norton.

This workshop focused on debates about broadening and diversifying audiences. It looked at how Compton Verney has developed audiences, which audiences have been prioritised and why, growing audiences for a new venue and the development of rural audiences.

[A fault on the recording machine meant that this report has had to be based on the power point presentation and the report writer's notes. With apologies to the presenters]

Balancing Act

Compton Verney is not the sort of place that might be associated with great diversity. Part of a beautiful stately home, set in the rolling countryside of Warwickshire, on outward appearance it looks like it is everything that is white, conservative and rural establishment.

Appearances can be deceptive however. Inside it is contemporary, hosting challenging contemporary art with lots of potential.

This is not to say that it doesn't have a range of issues to address. The gallery is new. It is closely identified with the founder and has struggled to communicate a clear identity. There is also an imperative to generate income which sometimes is at odds with its original philanthropic mission of bringing a wide range of people into contact with the art.

Rather than trying to push people through its doors, Compton Verney aims to '*open the doors*' and *invite people in*. Its exhibitions are of national importance so it does have an offering which has broad ranging appeal.

Curatorial policy and audience development have worked together to attract a range of audiences, working around thematic presentation ideas such as the Opulence and Anxiety and Fabric of Myth exhibitions. Linked to this, it has also developed its own 'sauna perspective' – giving visitors comfortable warmth and then shocking them with a cold shower!

### Developing audiences at Compton Verney

Within a one hour drive of Compton Verney

- There is a population of 4,399,926
- The C2DE demographic is 1,329,242
- 87.3% is white

There are different ways of looking at diversity. The Oxford English Dictionary defines it as:

*'the state of being diverse'*

*'a range of different things'*

*'showing a great deal of variety; very different'*

Arts Council England's definition is

*'By 'diversity', we mean that we will respond to issues around race, ethnicity, faith, disability, sexuality, class and economic disadvantage – any social or institutional barriers that prevent people from participating in and enjoying the arts.'*

*'We have a part to play in turning the diversity debate towards a positive celebration of diversity and the artistic and creative opportunities it offers.'*

For Compton Verney, the influence of its founder and patron, Sir Peter Moores has been especially important in defining the way the gallery looks at diversity. The Peter Moores foundation, set up in 1964 when he was a young man, aimed 'to get things done and open doors for people' especially in the fields of opera, the visual arts and education. Recognising the opportunities he had been given to explore and enjoy these areas in his youth, his life-long aim has been to create similar opportunities for others, especially young people.

### The Balancing Act – Reality Check

Compton Verney wanted to extend its visitor base and diversify its audience, but needed to be realistic about what it could achieve. It was a new venue, in a rural location, charging admission and with a distinctive programming policy.

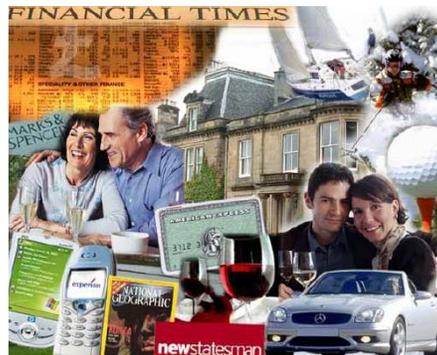
In terms of diversity therefore, a key aim was to attract different audiences, but based on sound knowledge of its existing visitor base. In order to analyse its current and potential audience, Mosaic (developed by Experian) was used. This is one of the geo-demographic segmentations available in the UK (alongside CACI Acorn, Claritas Prizm, etc)

It segments the neighbourhoods of Great Britain into different lifestyle 'groups' (11) and 'types' (61) according to their postcode (15 households) and is sourced from the Census, lifestyle and consumer surveys, Electoral Roll, Land Registry, etc. The typical nature of people living in the neighbourhood is described, including their financial circumstances, consumer and leisure habits, values and motivations.

By looking at the mosaic types which are higher within the visitor base than average UK figures, Compton Verney was able to think about the segments it wanted to work harder at attracting, either to gain more of the same people or to make strategic audience development decisions about segments which were currently undersubscribed and carried potential or fitted diversity objectives.

These Mosaic types were:

- **Symbols of Success**  
UK 10%, Compton Verney 32%
- Choicest housing, Rewarding careers, Professional occupations, High incomes, Exotic leisure pursuits, High net worth, Successful, Middle-aged
- **Suburban Comfort**  
UK 15%, Compton Verney 18%
- Self reliant, Plan for retirement, White collar workers, Hardworking, Comfortable homes, Independent, Mature suburbs, Older children, Married couples
- **Rural Isolation**  
UK 5%, Compton Verney 12%
- Nucleated villages, Mixed backgrounds / incomes / buildings, Village centric, Small stable communities, Self-employed or retirees, weekenders, tourists, commuters, Work long hours, Low disposable incomes, High assets
- **Grey Perspectives**  
UK 7%, Compton Verney 10%
- Mostly retired/pensioners, Couples/ widows/widowers, Time on their hands, Reasonably active lifestyles, Strong principles/prejudices, Reasonably good health, Downsized homes, Elderly neighbourhoods, Traditional
- **Urban Intelligence**  
UK 7%, Compton Verney 9%
- Liberal views, Cosmopolitan tastes, Well educated, Full time students, Professionals, Cultural variety, Open-minded, Few children, Young singles
- **Happy Families**  
UK 10%, Compton Verney 7%
- Steady income, Professionals (new industry), Brand is important, Materialistic, Newish homes, Post 1945 estates, Safe family communities, Pre-school/school age children, Young couples



### Diversity for Compton Verney

Diversity is important for Compton Verney but the organisation feels it is important to make its own definition and policy and not to have it imposed externally. Key points have been

- Realisation that there is already diversity amongst the core audience
- Learning programme used as a way of diversifying audiences
- Special events (Glyndebourne screening, Meet the Founder open day)
- Partnerships (Warwickshire libraries)

A very active policy of developing new audiences and encouraging diversity has involved the following elements.

*Learning and outreach:* working with a local pupil referral unit which enabled young people to develop their own projects working across a variety of media.

*Partnerships:* by collaborating with businesses such as Coventry Airport and public sector deliverers such as Warwickshire Libraries it has been possible to work alongside partners who already have users which Compton Verney are interested in.

*Through funding:* specific initiatives have enabled schools work to be heavily subsidised so that they can take part for free.

*Programming:* special events such as a Chinese Weekend have provided opportunities to talk to new communities about work of especial relevance to them. Peter Moores, Compton Verney's benefactor, has led visits and given talks, encouraging people to see the original motivation for establishing the gallery.



#### Diversity: exercise

Delegates then split up into groups to discuss what they saw as the positive and negative consequences of pursuing a policy of encouraging audience diversity.

Negative consequences included:

- Tendency to tokenism or doing things in order to tick boxes
- Pressured departments due to the workload required to develop new audiences
- Tension between achieving audience volume compared to finding new audiences

Positive consequences included:

- Organisation is owned by the whole community
- Encourages an audience focus
- Proactivity to targeting specific audience segments encourages a sound marketing approach [matching right benefits with right target groups]
- Leads to new interpretations of art and different cultural approaches
- An enriched audience experience generally, with new connections and greater 'buzz'