



METAMORPHOSIS



LOTTERY FUNDED

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**ARTS COUNCIL
ENGLAND**



CABASA



Cabasa commissioned artist Lizzie Rigby to create a series of paintings to go alongside our ongoing research and development into global body painting traditions. She has condensed her findings that inspired the paintings into an ongoing blog on her website: lizzierigby.co.uk

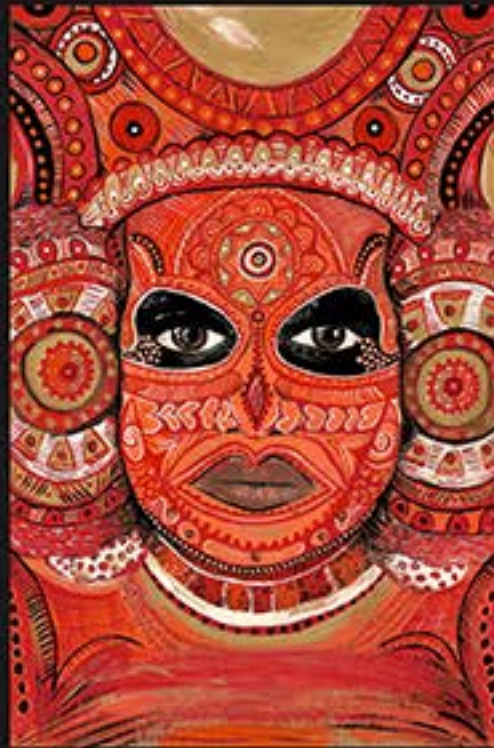
Lizzie has also been influenced by Cabasa's work with local women, using the art of full body painting to explore mental health and body image in Tameside. She is also one of the lead artists on this project.

I have created the blog to record my findings through researching tribal traditions of many cultures and how body painting has developed and exists in our society today, from the fashion industry to fine art photography.

Through exploring ancient ceremonies and incredible artists I hope to gain knowledge and understanding as well as inspiration to apply to Cabasa's ongoing body painting project.



CULTURE STUDIES - LIZZIE RIGBY





TRIBES OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Papua New Guinea is an island in the Pacific Ocean located north of Australia and east of Indonesia. Papua New Guinea has a rich diverse cultural landscape and developed independently, as the first contact from the outside world was only in the 1930's. There is an estimated 7000 different cultural groups in Papua New Guinea and the diversity of these groups is fascinating and beautiful, all speaking different languages and performing unique customs. Nowhere else in the world is there this many tribal communities who partake in body painting and adorn themselves with beautiful designs and costume pieces: from the Huli wig men to the Chimbu skeleton tribe. The customs and artistic style vary dramatically, each tribe having a beautifully strong visual identity, and taking pride in their artistry.



*Mendi girl adorned with vibrant face paint
Artwork by Lizzie Rigby. Photograph by Malcolm Kirk.*

There is something quite enthralling about the disparity between the beauty of the costumes, paint, cultural traditions, and the reason behind the high level of artistry and creativity – gruesome survival.

MENDI

PODAI PAINTINGS OF THE LOMA – GUINEA

Podai is the name given to this form of body art and the rituals where it is practiced. Podai is a tree which exists in parts of West Africa and the women produce an ink-like paint from the tree and use this to adorn younger members of the community for initiation ceremonies.

'Podai are masterfully composed images with a completely independent visual language based on the proportions of the human body' – Explains Karl Heinz-Krieg in his documentation of the Podai paintings ritual.



What drew me to the image of an adorned, young Loma girl was the detail of the painting on her body and the fact that the paintings are part of an initiation ceremony for young girls of the Loma community. During this rite of passage ceremony the girls live in bush camps outside of the traditional settlements and they are painted by experienced artists, who are women of the community who have practiced Podai paintings for many years.

A key feature of the body painting is the 'lip closing line', a line painted across the face above the lips – signifying the girls must remain silent for the duration of the ceremony 'till the dancing is over'...

LOMA GIRL





BODY PAINTING OF THE OMO VALLEY – ETHIOPIA

A fascinating contributor to the rich diversity of body art in this region is the absence of mirrors and reflections, as the Omo river water is cloudy. This definitely contributes to the artistic freedom and natural beauty of the artwork. In the painted bodies you can really feel the ritual and spiritual significance, and it's clear tribes living in this valley have been using body art as a form of expression and social bonding experience for thousands of years. Never having or needing the ability to see yourself, as you see yourself reflected in others with their reaction to the patterns and designs on your face – the body art really becoming an extension of who they are.



...A painting I created of a Hans Silvester photograph of two Surma men painting each other before a ceremony.

I thought this photograph captured a beautiful moment, the time and care taken to adorn each other and the creative expression captured, I found it inspirational and wanted to pay tribute to that specific moment but also the body painting of the Omo valley in general and its organic natural beautiful aesthetic.

SURMA MEN

TRADITIONAL RITUAL PERFORMANCE AND BODY ART OF THEYYAM - INDIA

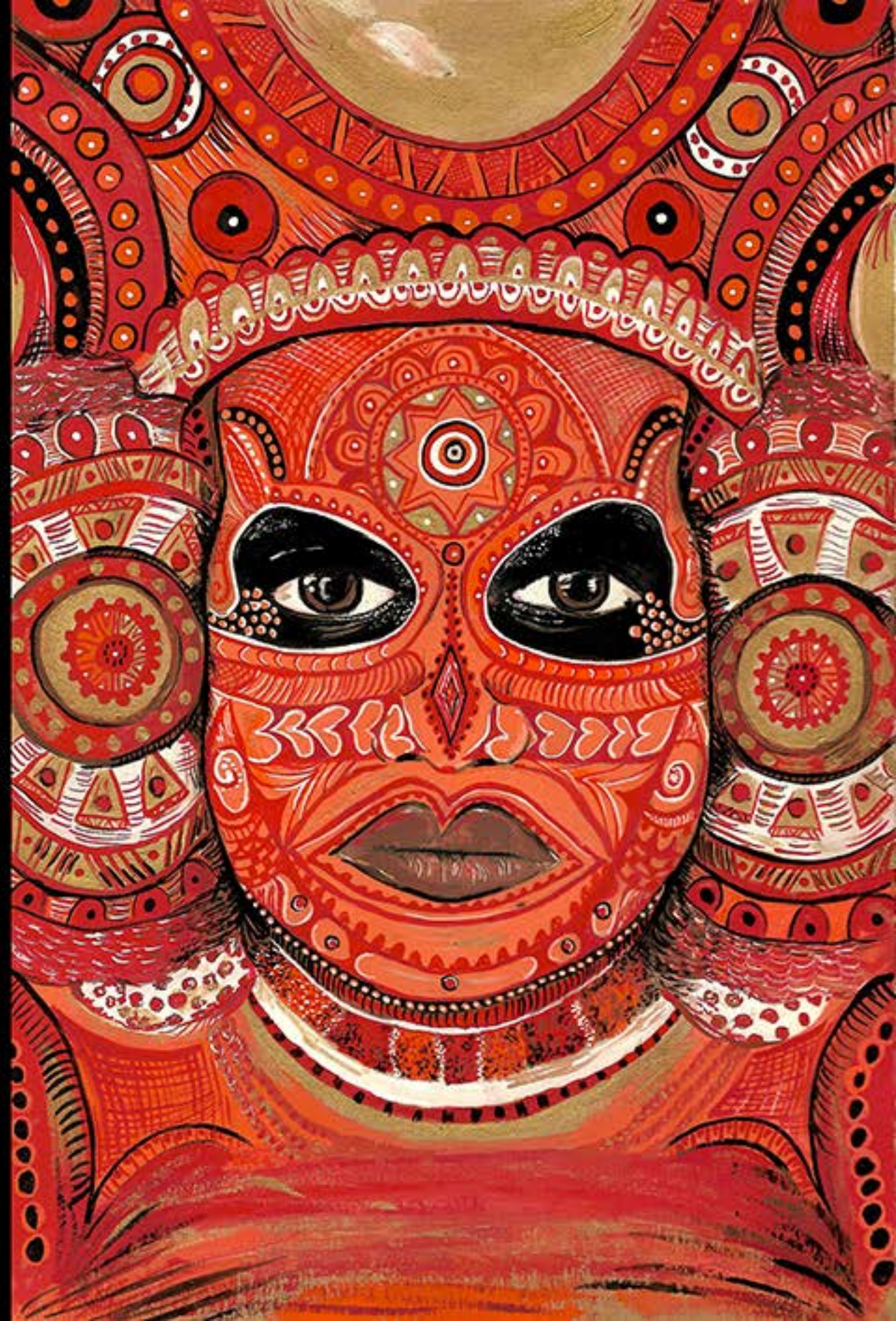
Theyyam is an Indian tradition – a ritual performance which takes place in front of the village shrines in Kerala, Southern India. The word Theyyam translates as 'GOD' – 'The dance of the Gods'. The performance combines many art forms: dance, sculpture, body art, music and usually fire is prevalent in the performance piece. The dance is an offering to the Hindu Goddess Kali – she is the destroyer and is synonymous with those powerful elements.

'Every deity's physical appearance conforms to an image envisaged centuries ago in the dream or vision of a respected Guru'.

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I think the intricacy of the body painting for these specific characters is amazing. This painting is my tribute to the Theyyam tradition.

THEYYAM





BODY PAINT OF ANCIENT BRITAIN

Who are the Woads and the Picts and did they paint themselves? It is highly contested whether they actually adorned themselves with blue paint, however the colour blue would have been achievable. As a native plant, the Woad can be used to produce blue dye, hence why Celts have been referred to as *the Woads*. Also another name given to northern Celt tribes was *the Picts*. Romans referred to Northern Britannia's Celtic peoples as the 'the Picts' due to their tattooed bodies. It's possible the Woad plant was used to paint the body before battles – but most likely it seems tattooing had become a custom amongst the tribes. They adorned themselves with symbols, local plants, and colours which would be specific to individual tribes.



It is thought that the Picts painted/tattooed themselves to look like fearsome warriors and to intimidate rival tribes. A book by Celtic historian Elizabeth Sutherland suggests: 'The primary reason for tattooing was probably to distinguish one tribal group from another in battle, the skin was pricked by bone or iron pins and rubbed with soot or herbal dyes to give it colour'.

My painting is inspired by the illustrations of the Picts – an ancient warrior woman adorned with symbols and native plants.

PICTISH WARRIOR

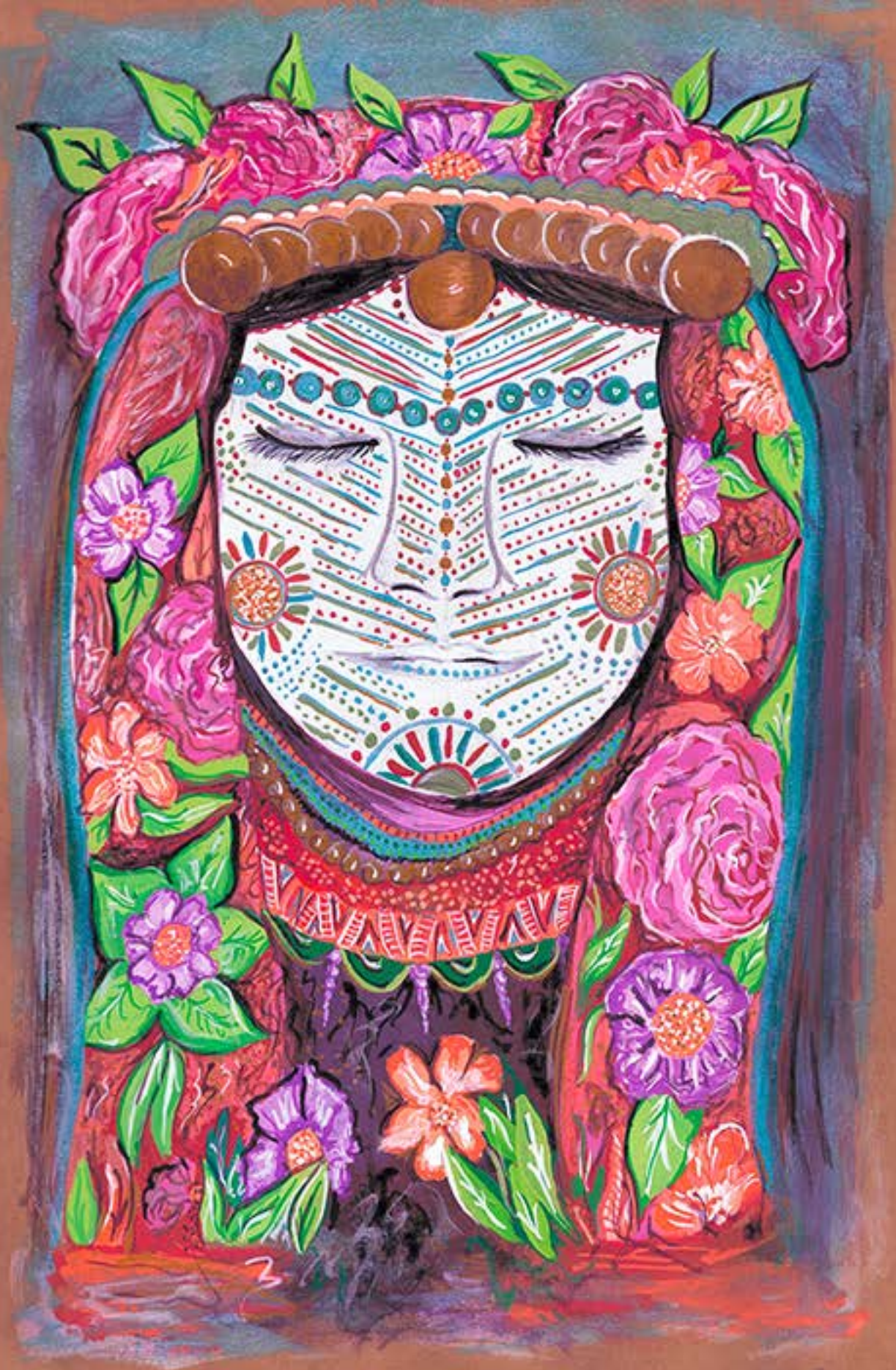
POMAK BRIDES OF BULGARIA

Pomak Brides - a tradition unique to some remote villages in Bulgaria, the tradition is practiced in a village called Draginova. Pomak is the name given to Slavic Muslims, the Muslim women of the village on their wedding day adorn themselves with paint and sequins, it seems like all of the women of the village come together to help get the bride ready, helping to adorn and dress her.

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I found an amazing Polish photographer (Marcin Nagraba) who has created a series of photographs called 'Pagan poetry' which are a celebration of Slavic culture and are definitely influenced by this bridal tradition. They are incredibly beautiful and informed my paintings.


POMAK BRIDES



EMPOWERING BODY PAINT FOR WELLBEING

Through our research and development, we have been exploring body paint and wellbeing for women in Tameside. We have been working with a number of local artists to develop their skills in the artform and assess the impact this can have as an empowering and transformative experience.





*" Art can help you cope with emotions,
becoming art can help you inhabit and be
empowered by them. Body painting has power
as a source of healing and empowerment."*

- Emma Cammack (Body Painting Artist)

"I feel like stripping off and being painted just freed me from all these day to day niggles I have about my body. It was definitely a form of therapy for me. I still draw on that feeling of security and acceptance every time I have a wobble about how I look."

- Lauren Moore (Body Painting Participant)



The artists involved also found the experience to be incredibly insightful, therapeutic and very powerful for them to realise and understand how powerful art can be for people's wellbeing.

" I didn't expect painting a person to be such an empowering experience for me. We spent hours painting, chatting and getting to know Adriana although it felt like just a few minutes! I'm so thankful to have been part of her experience and feel that we shared a joyful, peaceful and loving moment together that will stay with me for a long time "

- Kate Rothery (Trainee Artist)



*"...you know what this experience made me feel ?
Like a blossoming flower waiting to show her truth
colours! This experience gave me confidence,
laughter and being comfortable within my body and
mind just mind blowing.*

*Women's bodies are so amazing, I've learned to
appreciate my body so much due to realisation of
how hard my body worked to carry those babies,
giving birth and breastfeeding.*

Worth it all the tiger stripes and loose skin."

- Veronika Bogumska (Body Painting Participant)

