Chapter 10
Contemporizing Kensington: Popular Culture and the "Enchanted Palace" Exhibit

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Introduction

How can a heritage organization responsible for managing and delivering historic sites draw upon elements of popular culture to create compelling, contemporary experiences for tourists from around the world? In this chapter, we offer a case study of the "Enchanted Palace" exhibit, designed as a bridge between the typical walk-through experience at London's Kensington Palace in London's Hyde Park to one focusing on interactivity and delivering emotional resonance. For Historic Royal Palaces (HRP), the organization that maintains and manages five unoccupied palaces in and around London, it was described as the "most radical presentation project ever undertaken" (Marschner and Hill 2011, p. 3).

Our case study leverages primary archival materials from HRP, an interview with HRP Chief Executive Michael Day, reviews of the exhibit in traditional and interactive media, and field notes from a visit to the Enchanted Palace itself in April 2011. We demonstrate that while integrating popular culture to inform history may prove problematic for some visitors, it may also help organizations attract new audiences and achieve long-term goals. We offer a brief history of Kensington Palace (henceforth, Kensington) and then discuss the conceptualizations, strategies and tactics that infused "Enchanted."

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History

Nottingham House, Kensington's original core, was built between 1605 and 1620 by Sir George Coppin, a "businessman, politician, and minor landowner" (Impey 2003, pp. 13–14). William and Mary were unhappy at Whitehall Palace; central London's pollution aggravated William's asthma; and they deemed Hampton Court too far from the city (Impey 2003). So, William III and Mary II occupied Kensington. During their reign it was never really important to the royal court—likely because the couple was reticent to entertain (Brown and Kersting 1958). Nevertheless, Kensington required significant remodeling and expansion to suit their needs. So, Sir Christopher Wren, Surveyor of the King's Works, took control of the project. Improvements completed before Queen Mary's death included four new three-story pavilions, a new entrance, the Queen's Gallery, and a Guard Chamber (Historic Royal Palaces n.d.c, Kensington Palace 1689–1702). In 1695, William commissioned his last major addition—a King's Gallery connecting the two southern pavilions and enclosing a space now known as White Court. He died at Kensington in 1702 (Impey 2003).

Kensington's reputation slowly rose during Queen Anne's reign (1702–1707), but it also saw less royal use than before. She focused on improving its grounds, particularly the gardens, and added a summerhouse and a greenhouse/banquet hall, the orangery (Historic Royal Palaces n.d.d, Kensington Palace 1702–1714). Room interiors were improved for her and her consort Prince George.

London's urbanization also spurred George I's move to Kensington (Impey 2003). After a family quarrel in 1717 tarnished the royals' reputation among the aristocracy, he hosted events at the palace to regain popularity (Worsley 2010). In 1718, he commissioned a badly needed renovation, replacing what remained of Nottingham House with three staterooms. Yet, the ongoing renovations and George's dislike of court activities in general meant he used Kensington infrequently (Historic Royal Palaces n.d.e, Kensington Palace 1714–1727).

Kensington's heyday occurred during George II's reign. At his wife Queen Caroline's behest, in 1728 the grounds and gardens were significantly revamped. Kensington saw two distinct patterns of use during his reign. First, Caroline made it her principal home, and it "buzz[ed] with life and activity" (Brown and Kersting 1958, p. 23). After her death in 1737, the King held court there more frequently (Impey 2003).

In 1760, George III moved both his home and court to Buckingham Palace, reserving Kensington for his wife when they became estranged. By 1804, "Farmer George" was spending weekends at the more rural Windsor Castle, and Kensington's profile began a several-hundred year decline. It became a house for minor royals, such as Augustus, Duke of Sussex, Queen Victoria's fourth daughter Princess Louise, and George V's in-laws (Historic Royal Palaces 2010). Indeed, Edward VIII, who abdicated in favor of his younger brother Albert (George VI) so as to marry Wallis Simpson in 1936, had applied the term "aunt heap" to Kensington, reflecting the use of its "grace and favour" apartments as retirement locales for minor

royals (Alderson 2002). Kensington's public visibility has paralleled its privileging by royals, with highs and lows.

The only important resident in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was Princess Victoria, who lived there from her birth in 1819 until 1837. After her father the Duke of Kent died unexpectedly, the heir-apparent Victoria and her mother remained, virtually penniless, at Kensington (Historic Royal Palaces n.d.f, Kensington Palace 1760–1837). Her lonely childhood was relieved only by her main companions—her governess Louise Lehzen, her older sister Fedora (who married in 1828), and her childhood collection of 132 dolls (Impey 2003). Happily, though, she first met her cousin and future husband Prince Albert at Kensington when he visited at the behest of their uncle, King Leopold of Belgium.

In May 1837, 1 month after turning 18, Victoria became queen. Her first decree was to have her mother's bed removed from the bedroom they had shared; soon after, she moved the household to Buckingham Palace. Yet, Victoria retained an attachment to Kensington, and in 1899, after two years of renovation, opened it to the public (Worsley 2010). From 1912 to 1914, the state apartments housed the London Museum. Damaged by bombs in World War II, Kensington reopened in 1949, and 1 year later became home to the London Museum for 25 years (Historic Royal Palaces n.d.h, Up to the Present).

In 1960, Kensington saw increased interest when the newlywed jet-setters Princess Margaret and Antony Armstrong-Jones moved into "Apartment 1-A" (actually 20 rooms). Margaret lived there until her death in 2002 (Historic Royal Palaces 2010). Yet, Kensington's resurgence is almost solely attributable to Princess Diana, deemed by many to be the most glamorous woman of the twentieth century (Historic Royal Palaces n.d.h, Up to the Present). By 1988, with her marriage to Prince Charles crumbling, Diana was living mainly at Kensington, while Charles stayed at Highgrove (Smith 2012). Diana resided at Kensington until her death in Paris on August 31, 1997. The next day, floral bouquets began to appear in front of the south gate, and over several days, some one million arrangements accumulated to a depth of up to five feet. To accommodate approximately 136,000 mourners wanting to sign condolence books, the palace remained open for 24 h straight on September 6 (Historic Royal Palaces n.d.a, Diana).

In October 2013, the Duke and Duchess of Cambridge (aka: "Will and Kate") moved into the renovated Apt. 1A. This move has again drawn attention to the palace, and has elicited comparisons between Diana and Kate (Kay and Levy 2011). Yet, the couple's decision to make Kensington its London base has not been the only newsworthy event. In March 2012, the queen officially reopened the palace after HRP spearheaded a £ 12 million/$ 18 million refurbishment and restoration. Although it is occupied once again, HRP will continue to manage the part of the palace open to tourists. New exhibits focus on Queen Victoria's youth (Kennedy 2011), Princesses Diana and Margaret, and the early monarchs who had lived there (Historic Royal Palaces n.d.g, New Exhibitions). HRP also restored the palace gardens, and added a courtyard terrace and café (Historic Royal Palaces n.d.b, How we are transforming the palace), hoping to boost yearly visitors from 250,000 to 350,000 (Walker 2011).

HRP's decision to not close Kensington during the two-year renovation period afforded it the opportunity to create a liminal exhibit—one that could help it transform the touristic experience in a permanent, meaningful way—through staging an experience it called the "Enchanted Palace" exhibit (henceforth: Enchanted). In the rest of this chapter, we explore the ways it relied on aspects of popular culture to do so.

Goals and Themes

Enchanted served three purposes during its two–year existence. First—and quite practically—HRP sought to keep income flowing and provide financial stability for Kensington during the renovation. HRP Chief Executive Michael Day worried that if the palace closed down completely, it would have to reopen at a much-reduced price, or even for free, to attract visitors. Obviously, this scenario was not financially appealing. Second, Enchanted offered HRP the opportunity to reposition perceptions of Kensington as stately, quiet, and modest. Previously, its touristic experience had been passive and predictable (Day described it as "dreadful…all the significant moments in history were lost"). He saw the renovations "as an opportunity to experiment" with contemporizing the palace (Michael Day, interview by Cele Otnes, June 17, 2012). HRP's position was that Kensington's residents had not lived quiet nor stately lives, so why should the exhibit support that perception? HRP wanted to change people's perceptions of the palace, and saw the hiatus as an opportunity to do so while still attracting visitors: "We wanted to create an experience that was sensual, emotional, and social" (Marschner and Hill 2011, p. 19).

Through rebranding, HRP sought new audiences comprised of families and local community members. Day noted that HRP specifically wanted to capture the audience segment it called the "cool–rejecters" (Michael Day, interview by Cele Otnes, June 17, 2012), those who typically eschew touristic experiences based on three aspects—cost, location, and a dated atmosphere. Along with new types of customers, HRP wanted repeat visitors, and to appeal to learners and people of all ages.

Third, the exhibit aligned with HRP's mission of preserving Kensington's place within the cultural landscape. HRP's goal always seeks to maintain the majesty, pageantry, and grand traditions of its royal residences. Yet ironically, Enchanted does not align clearly with this goal, as we discuss below.

Finally, HRP sought to evoke and enhance its visitors' emotional engagement. The exhibit tried to enable visitors to share the loves, losses, jealousies, and joys felt by the seven princesses whose stories it told: Mary, Anne, Caroline, Charlotte, Victoria, Margaret, and Diana (Fig. 10.1). Day notes that when lecturing on museum experiences, he asks people:

> …to think of one fact…they can remember [from] reading a label or a graphic panel at museum or an historic site. And nothing ever sticks. And then I say, "Think of the most evocative stand-out experience in an historic site you've ever had." Almost always, it's some kind an emotional response to the space or the story, and it's very personal, and it will stick with people for years and years afterwards. (Michael Day, interview by Cele Otnes, June 17, 2012)

Fig. 10.1 Enchanted Palace poster. (Courtesy Cele Otnes)

Conceptualization and Core Texts

Kensington's long history meant HRP could have imbued its exhibit with myriad stories. But its goal was to create a powerful experience for visitors, so it chose to create a coherent theme around the tales of the princesses who had lived within the palace walls over the past four centuries. Each narrative was conceived to connect their histories with issues experienced by contemporary audiences, such as "the desire for love, the bitter end of friendship, willful rebellion, sweet marriages and sad ones, lonely childhoods, battles between youth and age, betrayal of trust, thirst for knowledge" (Marschner and Hill 2011, p. 21).

HRP's initial idea was to convert the palace into a fairy tale castle replete with archetypal stories of the princesses and their troubles, but in more of a "Brothers Grimm" manifestation than as a Disneyesque one. This idea developed into the Enchanted Palace exhibit (Marschner and Hill 2011). HRP chose WildWorks, an international theatrical company based in Cornwall, to collaborate in creating the exhibit, although at first "neither partner knew the exact destination, but both agreed on the direction of travel" (Marschner and Hill 2011, p. 16). WildWorks focuses on

site-specific theater events—that is, ones not produced for the stage but for unique sites such as quarries, harbors, and (after working with HRP) palaces.

WildWorks suggested two key guidelines for Enchanted. First, it should rely on the real stories that occurred in the royal residence. Second, the renovation itself should be incorporated into the exhibit, with the idea that the "vibration and disturbance were shaking the stories out of the walls of the palace with the dust, and that they were somehow running free in the State Apartments" (Marschner and Hill 2011, p. 18). The designers wanted to incorporate story telling throughout, along with navigation that could be either self-directed or social (e.g., with the assistance of staff). Visitors would wander mostly unguided through rooms dedicated to the princesses whose spirits lived within Kensington's walls. This would ensure that visitors could not be passive observers but would become involved in the performances.

To accomplish this goal, Day noted that HRP and WildWorks "drew up a list of things not to do in a palace—make a noise, fall asleep on the floor, sit on a throne, kiss, play ball games, go barefoot, and so on. We were determined to see how many of these we could accommodate" (Michael Day, interview by Cele Otnes, June 17, 2012). Breaking the stereotypes of palace museum patronage was key to the conceptual development of the exhibit.

One way Enchanted's conceptualization was made tangible and coherent was through the creation of key texts. In 2009, Mercedes Kemp of WildWorks penned a poem for each princess, which served as catalysts to communicate their tales through other key elements that could blend imagination with historical fact. In truth, however, the team privileged creating a modern space that could connect the audience to the princesses on an emotional, human level over any straightforward, fact-based presentation. As Kemp notes, "Fairytales are not works of fantasy but, rather, works of imagination. At the centre of each story there is a powerful image and a question: *what if?* The poems of the seven princesses at Kensington Palace started just like that" (Marschner and Hill 2011, p. 22). Each poem was included in a storybook that was placed in each of the "princess rooms."

Many of these women did not live "happily ever after," and Enchanted was deliberately designed to reflect and even highlight that fact. One collaborator notes:

> Imagining a line with Disney's *Cinderella* at one end and Tim Burton's *Sleepy Hollow* at the other, we decided we wanted to explore the darker end of the continuum, truer to both the original historical stories and the fairy-tale theme itself. 'Strange and beautiful…' were the two words that most closely summed up our aspirations for [the exhibit]. (Marschner and Hill 2011, p. 27)

Central texts were just the first elements used to communicate the essence of each narrative. As we discuss below, atmospherics, art, performances, and fashion played equally important roles. Furthermore, HRP wanted visitors to actively participate in and experience the exhibit at their own pace and in their direction. It eschewed rules of traditional displays and encouraged interactivity, helping to enhance visitors' curiosity while connecting the princesses' emotions to their own.

Atmospherics

Kensington's rooms were typically well lit for easy viewing, yet Enchanted featured darkened rooms to elicit different moods among its visitors. Windows were shut or tinted, with light directed toward key areas in the rooms so visitors could learn the stories. These settings created a strange, spooky atmosphere. In addition, sound effects typically conveyed a melancholy feeling to help evoke the princesses' own emotions.

The mysterious atmosphere extended beyond sensory aspects of the experience to the actual names of the rooms themselves. These included evocative labels such as the "Room of Beginnings," the "Room of Lost Childhood," the "Room of Palace Time," and the "Room of the World, World in a Room." These monikers both added to the mystique of the exhibit and adhered to the strategy of not revealing too much information but encouraging guests to discover the history themselves. Consider the emotional potential the name "Room of a Sleeping Princess" offers, when compared to a name such as "Victoria's Bedroom."

Art

At the WildWorks workshops in Cornwall, designers Bill Mitchell, Myriddian Wannell, and Sue Hill collaborated to fabricate the exhibit installations to HRP's exacting standards (Marschner and Hill 2011). Although these would differ from traditional museum elements, they still needed to communicate dignity and to project quality worthy of such a site. Most importantly, they had to adhere to a standard to ensure that the palace would incur no damage, enabling HRP to adhere to its overarching goal of preserving Kensington for posterity.

The art objects and installations in each room elicited emotions related to the princesses' tragedies. For example, in the "Room of Royal Sorrows" (Fig. 10.2)

Fig. 10.2 The Room of Royal sorrows. (Courtesy Steve Tanner)

Table 10.1 Art installations in the Enchanted Palace Exhibit. (Marschner and Hill 2011, pp. 38–39)

Room	Installation
Room of Beginnings	A guiding tree with branches pointing the way
Room of Royal Sorrows	A lachrymal of tear catchers; tags recording the last time visitors cried
Room of enlightenment	"Hats of the Divine Geometer," floating above busts of great thinkers
Seat of Power	The "Peoples Throne," broadcasting visitors' wishes for all in the room to hear
Room of Palace Time	A musical clock surrounded by a metallic "Dresses of the Colour of Time"
Room of the World, World in a Room	"A Dress of the World" and the "Cabinet of Curiosities"
Room of Dancing Princesses	A birch forest surrounding dresses representing Princess Margaret and Diana
Room of a Sleeping Princess	Life-size, exaggerated dolls and a chair
Rooms of Lost Childhood	Delicate toys that may not be touched
Gallery of War and Play	Toy soldiers and games of men and boys
Room of Royal Secrets	A shrine to Peter, the Wild Boy
Room of Fish and Beer	A display of domestic palace life
Room of the Quarrel	Broadcast of the last fight of Queen Anne and Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough
Gallery of Dancing Shadows	Shadows of princesses dancing on the ceiling

visitors saw a display of dozens of antique "tear catchers," decorative bottles used to capture falling tears during mourning. When the tears had evaporated from the bottles, the mourning period was over. A body representing both Queen Mary II and Queen Anne, who had failed to produce heirs to the throne, is represented by fabric suspended in the air. Visitors looking closely saw it was imprinted with rain falling down windows; even closer scrutiny revealed faint pictures of babies in wombs. Another room consisted of 18 empty chairs, representing Queen Anne's miscarriages and loss of children.

Engaging visitors in ways that exceeded presenting facts called for a plethora of art installations throughout the exhibit. These varied widely (some might say wildly) in their content and style, and were often designed in collaboration with fashion designers who created gowns for the princesses, which we discuss later. Yet, their common goal was to draw visitors into the inner lives of palace residents as imagined by the exhibits' creators. Table 10.1 summarizes the art installations included in the Enchanted Palace exhibit; we discuss a few in detail below.

Although confined in their daily lives, in their imaginations and dreams the princesses could be free. This concept was essential to the configuration of Princess Victoria's bedroom, which was transformed from a simple room into a wonderland where she could escape in her dreams. A bed piled high with mattresses watched over by a chair with absurdly elongated spindly legs accentuated the strangeness of

Fig. 10.3 A dress of the world. (Courtesy Steve Tanner)

the larger-than-life figures in the room. Designer Paul Costelloe created renditions of Victoria's dolls partially suspended by puppet strings and dressed in his take on nineteenth century fashion. The figures loomed over visitors and communicated the imposing, controlled world that encased the Princess, just as her mother had dominated her young life (Marschner and Hill 2011).

Likewise, the "Rooms of Lost Childhood," staged next to Victoria's bedroom, evoked the loneliness of a royal child who is "precious but not loved" (Marschner and Hill 2011, p. 40), through the sheer lack of inaccessibility and interactivity. These rooms featured toys that could not be played with, and unattainable and clearly unusable baby accessories trapped behind protective glass; in other words, trappings of a normal childhood but without its spirit.

Two major art installations graced the "Room of the World, World in a Room." Both reflected how the stories of regular people intertwine, in the same way as royal ones do. "The Dress of the World" (Fig. 10.3), created by Echo Morgan, is a white Georgian court dress with extremely wide panniers known as a mantua. It rested on a rolling cart, and the light glowing from within illuminated the figures and cutouts on its surface, projecting its stories outward into the room. The Cabinet of Curiosities, though outwardly plain and imposing, possesses a rich and vibrant inner life. Morgan also collaborated on the cabinet, describing it as "a modest king who keeps everything inside and the dress is the show-off queen who uses the world's color to decorate her beauty" (Marschner and Hill 2011, p. 56). The wardrobe opens to reveal artwork featuring the spiritual and emotional journeys of generations of women to London and contains articles from all over the world that reflect those journeys (Marschner and Hill 2011).

Performance

HRP wanted performance to be integral to the exhibit, and the team relied on both WildWorks' actors and palace employees to "incite curiosity, to point the way, to

tell the stories" (Marschner and Hill 2011, p. 11). To facilitate such interactivity, WildWorks trained employees to serve in one of two roles throughout the exhibit: Detectors and Explainers. Following through on the concept that the renovations were shaking the stories out of the palace, Detectors acted as servants who had lived in Kensington with the princesses. These servants were inspired by "Mrs. Elliot," a housekeeper whose portrait hangs in the Queen's Apartments. Detectors told visitors how they had always lived in the palace, and they were charged both with detecting changes within the rooms, and with sharing stories from the past. Bill Mitchell, WildWorks' Artistic Director, explained that Detectors "collect the things the construction vibration is shaking loose. They don't understand what's happening [and] constantly try to invent ways to hold time back, ceaselessly look[ing] for their beloved princesses" (Marschner and Hill 2011, p. 30). Visitors were supposed to perceive them as living extensions of the exhibit.

WildWorks also relied on HRP's Warders, staff who know all of the palace's stories, and who typically work behind the scenes. In the past, Warders could not always share knowledge with visitors who perused the palace via audio guides. Through rigorous workshops, WildWorks transformed Warders into storytellers known as Explainers, who then initiated conversations with visitors and answered questions about the exhibit.

Visitors also engaged in their own performances as well. In the "Room of Royal Sorrows," they wrote down the last time they had cried on small slips of paper and tied them to the guard rails, connecting them to Mary's sadness. (As the Appendix shows, not all visitors picked up on this option.) One art piece that literally trumpeted visitors' participation was a modern throne of red, blue, and gold, its back emblazoned with a brilliant sun, in the "Seat of Power" room. Visitors were encouraged to sit on it and voice their innermost desires, which would then be broadcast throughout the room.

Another example was the "Room of War and Play." Designed as a respite from the princess theme that dominated the exhibit, it provided visitors the opportunity to play with toy soldiers and military games as previous palace children had done, while hearing tales about William III's military campaigns. Interactivity also fostered community connections; on one entrance wall, HRP invited local children and teens to draw ideas of what a princess might dream of at night. This activity drew local residents to view the fruits of their children's labor.

Fashion

To further connect the princess' histories to contemporary audiences, HRP commissioned a dress for each princess to represent her life in the palace. Fashion designers collaborated with WildWorks' artists and Kensington's curators to understand the princesses' stories and craft a magnificent dress that captured the essence of each narrative. To inspire and stimulate ideas, HRP created "tantalizing dress names" to guide their conceptualization (Marschner and Hill 2011, p. 42).

For example, William Tempest created "A Dress for Dreaming of Freedom In," made from thousands of handcrafted origami cranes, to represent Princess Victoria. Her childhood was highly regulated; through her mother's Kensington system, "every cough, every piece of bread and butter consumed, every stamp of the tiny foot was under constant surveillance" (Williams 2009, p. 164). Tempest's dress drew on two sources to represents Victoria's wish to escape her mother's control and achieve her freedom. First, he incorporated the Japanese legend that says if a person folds 1000 origami cranes, he or she will be granted a long life, freedom, or recovery from illness. Second, he alluded to Victoria's wallpaper pattern, which had featured birds.

Vivienne Westwood created "A Dress for Rebellion" (Fig. 10.4) to reflect the life of Princess Charlotte, the only child of George IV and Caroline of Brunswick. Their marriage was very unhappy, and family arguments were a common feature of Charlotte's childhood. Separated from her mother and forced to live with her father, she became unruly and rebellious. Westwood's red silk taffeta dress repre-

Fig. 10.4 A dress for rebellion. (Courtesy Steve Tanner)

sents Princess Charlotte's rebellious attitude and eagerness to escape her childhood by marriage. Positioned at the top of the famous "King's Staircase," which depicted servants and courtiers who had lived in Kensington (Worsley 2010), the gown depicts Charlotte running down the stairs and away from the palace, toward her life with her husband.

Reactions

As Day's earlier quote averred, most visitors find it difficult to become passionate about museum exhibits; when prompted for an opinion about their experiences, they often provide vague and noncommittal responses. Yet, reactions to Enchanted were anything but bland or ambiguous. Day noted "the spectrum of responses was much greater than we had previously known. Much higher than the best we'd ever had, and much lower than the worst we'd ever had. And in numerical terms … most of it was at the positive spectrum. But of course, the criticisms always hurt more" (Michael Day, interview by Cele Otnes, June 17, 2012). Online reviews ranged from glowing five-star comments to expletive-laden diatribes—both representing unusually strong sentiments for visits to an old palace. But, as we hopefully have made clear, this exhibit was untraditional in every sense.

In that vein, the exhibit achieved its goal of inverting the traditional museum experience, and positive reactions to Enchanted reflected that fact. Those who spent time with the Explainers felt adequately provided with historical knowledge. One visitor noted, "We spent about two hours in there, chatting to the detectors and the other staff, who were friendly and endlessly informative about anything from the obstetric minutiae of Princess Charlotte's childbirth ordeal, to the military strategy behind the childhood games of the little Duke of Gloucester" (Trip Advisor n.d.). Even those disappointed with their experience admitted the staff was helpful and informative.

Likewise, travel sites advised potential visitors that Enchanted is truly wonderful "if one lets go of any preconceived ideas and just goes with the exhibit" (Time Out n.d.). One reviewer who thoroughly enjoyed the experience summed it up best: "If you're coming to KP to see the state rooms, don't bother. It's that simple" (Trip Advisor n.d.).

The saying "to make an omelet you have to break a few eggs" seemed germane to the thinking behind HRP and Wildworks; their version could be captured as "to create an exhibit like Enchanted, you have to upset a few people." And upset people it did. Angry customer reviews on the Web ranged from lambasting Enchanted as a children's exhibit to a blatant means for HRP to continue collecting during Kensington's renovations. Disappointed customers clearly had expected a traditional museum experience and were upset when they encountered what they perceived as an ill-conceived art project. Another visitor complained of the darkness, noting, "I can only assume [the Enchanted theme] is meant to appeal to children. However, I can easily see children being frightened by the… almost creepy vibe that the exhibit puts off" (Yelp, Kensington Palace).

Fig. 10.5 Princess Margaret and Diana. (Courtesy Steve Tanner)

Others, however, were quick to defend HRP on the charge that visitors had not been prepared for an unusual twist on a traditional palace perusal. Trip Advisor noted the absence of a traditional tour "is made very clear at the entrance to the palace, before you buy your tickets" (Trip Advisor n.d.). Furthermore, although WildWorks had originally thought keeping the untraditional nature of the exhibit a surprise would enhance the experience, HRP increasingly began to forewarn visitors to expect the unexpected. Day noted, "over the two-year life of Enchanted, we did much, much more context setting" (Michael Day, interview by Cele Otnes, June 17, 2012).

Still, many reviewers felt they were tricked into the experience. "At the end of the tour, I received a sticker for finding all of the princesses [sic] names! I realized this is the biggest tourist trap in London," one Canadian visitor complained (Yelp n.d.b, Enchanted Palace). Furthermore (and as is somewhat the case in our own visit; see Appendix), visitors did not always understand their roles, or the messages Enchanted's artists were trying to convey. One noted, "it's very geared towards your daughters; fantasizing the lives of princesses with only a few facts thrown in. They really try to play up the enchanted princess stereotype" (Yelp n.d.a, Kensington Palace) (Fig. 10.5). Ironically, this assessment was actually the direction the creators tried to de-deemphasize, in favor of darker aspects of the fairy tale.

Discussion

What role did popular culture play in the creation of Enchanted? First, the entire exhibit plays on an existing literary genre that has been kept alive in both more "innocent" form (e.g., classic "Disney" versions), but also in ways more emotionally evocative and challenging (e.g., the "Tim Burton" versions). Second, by incorporating art installations that featured common objects such as toy soldiers, dolls, origami cranes, and ballet shoes, Enchanted plays up the sometimes problematic postmodern notion of pastiche—using artistic representations to evoke other artistic efforts and symbols. Third, its most blatant popular-culture elements—namely, the

gowns created by popular British designers—evoke not only the traditional perceptions of princesses and their lavish lifestyles but serve as poignant and ironic pointers that even princesses in lavish gowns can endure pain and suffering. In short, for HRP and WildWorks, popular culture becomes a mechanism to make Enchanted accessible by incorporating new twists on the familiar. As we hope this chapter demonstrates, merging heritage and popular culture poses risks for heritage managers who must balance visitors' desire for an "authentic" historical experience with organizational objectives to create experiences that offer lasting impact. Yet, ultimately, Michael Day was proud of HRP's "organizational courage to be bold" in reshaping visitors' expectations in their visit to Kensington, and in reframing their expectations inasmuch as some of the spirit and artifacts of Enchanted remained after the palace reopened in 2012.

Appendix

Cele Otnes Field Notes, Enchanted Palace Exhibit Visit, March 29, 2011

Pauline [Maclaran] and I…got to Kensington about 11:45…We had to ask directions…because the first entrance was closed; sign said "due to construction." I knew something was up at the palace, but wasn't aware of the extent of the renovation/rebranding—turned out to be quite something, as the following attests! Things got interesting as we approached. Lots of signs assured visitors the palace was "still open." As these abated, signs and promotions for the "magical palace" took over; as well as one for a dog show at the Palace (which seemed bizarre!).

As we were almost to the entry, there was a hole in the fence where we could see workers digging gardens, and some fantasy-like images on posters promoting the exhibit, apparently named "Enchanted Palace," hinting that royal secrets would be revealed. We talked about the metaphors this evoked: Mardi Gras, Tim Burton, Alice in Wonderland…and also its feminist images. After leaving the foyer and ticket counter areas, photos were prohibited.

When we approached the entry hall to the exhibit, we learned we couldn't proceed until we listened to an explanation of what we were about to see. We were told the exhibit is about discovering the seven princesses who had lived in the palace over the last 300 years, and is meant to symbolize their stories. The "hostess" providing the orientation offered lots of information about the narratives in the palace. She took us through the map inside our guidebooks that was drawn almost childishly, like a treasure map. This graphic immediately made me realize this would not be like a traditional palace tour [i.e.; stodgy]…The "hostess" emphasized there would be people in livery (e.g., the uniforms of different palace servants) who could explain the rooms for us. Either she or the brochure (or both) used the term "Explainers" for these folks. There were others in period costumes, which we learned about later. The hostess described the palace during the Georgian and Tudor eras (1669–1760), the setting for many key stories and residents. She said the rooms on

our maps with the red crowns housed the more personal stories of the seven princesses, and that these stories were the common thread of the exhibition.

We walked up an empty stairwell painted peacock blue and arrived in a low-lit room. We commented on its haunted-house feel. It was called the "Room of Royal Sorrows." Off the bat, it was very bizarre, and not what one would expect in a palace exhibit. For example, blue light bulbs in the chandeliers produced little illumination; it was very shadowy and almost depressing. Also, the typical guard rope that restricts people from prohibited areas was laced with small tags (like price tags) where people had written their names and comments.

This room (as did many, we learned later) contained a bound notebook with a calligraphy-type poem that was eerie/mysterious/cryptic about the princess who had lived in the room. This one began: "There is a Maid of the Royal Tears/There is a Woman of the Royal Sorrows…." It went on for a few pages in similar form, but it was difficult to discern what it was really talking about. Later, we learn it was about Princess Mary losing a baby, but I think we had to get that from the guidebook and not from the poem.

Each "princess room" also contains a disembodied dress by a famous designer, each posed in a way a human form would be. In this room, the "princess" (dress) looks longingly in a mirror. The gown's placard identified the designer (I think this one was by Bruce Oldfield). Other key aspects of this room convey sorrow. We learn the glass bottles are "tear-catchers" to save people's tears when they are in mourning. Mary apparently had several miscarriages. The fabric on the bedposts looks decorative, but on closer inspection, actually features abstract fetuses.

Next, we walk into a wide gallery-type room with large busts of Sir Isaac Newton, Sir Francis Boyle (of Boyle's law), and another scientist (couldn't tell who). The ambience is still dark and mysterious. An Explainer is stationed behind an old wood writing desk with a hinged top. I don't know if we asked her a question, or if she just launched into her spiel with the statement "All scientists belonged to our queens." She talked about how Princess/Queen Caroline loved science and Isaac Newton, but that she (the Explainer) personally loved Boyle because he did thus and so. She was very friendly and obviously extremely well-trained. She said the dress in this room represents something "different from the scientists." I didn't quite understand that, and it didn't seem as effective as the dress portraying Mary in the previous room. She mentioned that the train on the dress was added to indicate that even after a queen's reign, "something always remains."

She opened the desk and whipped out laminated pictures of pieces of the British Royal Family Tree and explained how some were related to Queen Charlotte. At one point I wondered if we would be "trapped" by Explainers in every room, or if we could escape if we wanted, which happily turned out to be the case. In the end, the exhibit didn't feature that many rooms; clearly the organizers were aiming for quality of experience over quantity.

Pauline and I discussed how well trained the Explainers were with respect to the narratives they shared. She noted they seemed trained to inject personal angles into the stories (e.g., our Explainer had noted, "Queen Caroline—I loved her and I

hated her…because she was a strong woman, but also thought a man should reign and not a woman").

In the next room, a really long title of a poem was suspended from the ceiling—something written in the 1600s called "Epithalamium to a Princess." We learned it was to commemorate Princess Charlotte's wedding. Again, we still perceived the haunted house feel. We turned and saw a Vivienne Westwood dress poised atop a long staircase; it represented the miserable Princess Charlotte running through the palace and trying to escape.

We moved next into the "Gallery of War and Play." It was my favorite for a few reasons. First, I knew Mark [husband] would have loved it. Also, we engaged in some good role-play interaction with a "Detector," explained below. The room was a huge picture gallery with toy soldiers set up on fake hills and dales; there were seemingly tons on the floor, swarming like ants. In the middle was a full-size British officer's red uniform and regalia. Military cadences and music played in the background. We commented how it was like a piece of installation art.

Then a man came up to me in kind of a workman's outfit and said (which I LOVED), "Pardon me ma'am, if you're planning a naval campaign against the French over the weekend, I would not advise it." He pointed to a piece of weather equipment on the wall (he identified it; I forgot the name) and said it wasn't working, and wouldn't be a reliable indicator of the weather across the Channel. Pauling and I laughed at this, and I made a smart remark like, "Oh well, there go my plans to invade France." We wander away, and Pauline asks me what he was supposed to be. I say "no idea," and suggest we go back and ask him, which we do. He says he is a servant and a "Detector," and he's been here since the palace was built 330 odd years ago. He added, "When you're over 300 years old, it's not possible to remember everything". He said his job is to take measure of activities in the palace since the time of William of Orange, and to make sure the ambience is what it should be in order to please the court.

He and an Explainer hover around a table featuring games from the time of William III. These are military-strategy games; one features pieces that look like origami cranes. We don't ask about the rules (not really interested), but we are interested that they are there. Our Detector tells us the soldier installation on the floor is supposed to simulate William of Gloucester playing with his Uncle, William of Orange. He says he tells visitors from France to pretend they're from Switzerland because King William always seems to want to invade France (or vice versa; couldn't quite tell).

The next room features guard rails decorated with flowers, and poems piped through a speaker. It contains a cradle and seems to be a child's nursery; there didn't seem to be much going on in there. In fact, we thought we were in the "Room of the Quarrel," but that actually ended up being later. We had our "treasure map" mixed up (it was kind of hard to follow).

Pauline comments on the intertextuality of the whole experience, and I agree. We enter Victoria's bedroom, with five life-size figures that look like huge marionettes. We meet James the Explainer (quite friendly). He begins quite a long treatise about

how Victoria couldn't have any friends while growing up, because royal children could only play with royal children and there weren't any around. So she made dolls and they were her friends. These are represented as life-size to capture their importance to her. This was also the room where she was awakened to learn she had become Queen at 18. Once again, we commented on how the Explainer was excellent, beautifully trained, and courteous.

James tells us the exhibit will be over at the end of 2011. He noted the staff makes a big effort first thing in the morning to discuss whether visitors seem to understand what they are about to see. We talk about the edgy nature of the exhibit and he says, "It's a risk," but that it definitely is appealing more to younger adults and teenagers. He said the purpose is to awaken curiosity and spur visitors to go learn more about the monarchs. The Explainers are trained to know "the more obscure stories," but these tend to be very interesting.

We comment on the feminist aspect of the exhibit, because there is a lot about empowerment. James observes that at the same time, many of these women had to marry princes much older than they were, so it captures the tragedy and joys of womanhood. As a result, it's empowering and sobering at the same time—hard to pull off, and thus, intriguing.

We enter something that looks like a banquet hall, containing artifacts representing global connections and women. There is a tapestry made by a "children's centre" with threads running across it. James comes in; he also explains in this room. He tells us the cabinet containing the tapestry and dress "denotes the emotional and geographical journeys of women." He says the staff contributed some items; e.g., dresses and photos from their childhood. A "Stitches in Time" tapestry contains different countries quilted on and connected by pink ribbons.

Next is the "Room of New Beginnings." It contains two dresses in different glass cases—one (or both; unsure) represents Princess Margaret. There is a beautiful ball gown, but with red shoes (a bit unexpected). Pauline observes there is a very moralist series of books featuring red shoes that her grandmother used to read her. She thinks the shoes are in fact kind of sinister (note the intertextuality). In the case, the gown, red shoes and long white evening gloves are suspended with no body. The other case features a gown like the one Nicole Kidman wore to the Academy awards (more intertextuality), and also floating feathers.

The next room is a ballroom. It features the image of a woman dancing in shadow and projected on the ceiling. I assumed this is supposed to represent Princess Diana. I thought this was the only reference to Diana in the whole exhibit, which is very different from 2005, when her gowns were on display and there were lots of Diana postcards in the gift shop. We exit and head to the shop. Afterward, we then go to the Orangery for tea (four pages of same on the menu)! It was built in 1704 during Anne's reign, and is definitely part of the palace consumption experience. We wondered how Diana fans would view the exhibit. Pauline noted she thought it was a great way of "diluting Diana" by contextualizing her with the other six princesses, and marginalizing her in a subtle way.

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