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Radical Creativity ~ The Way Nature Intended

Artists as Activists; Creating Social Change

The Practice of Council and Creativity

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Where we Wander: Go Happen

JACOB WOODS



On a road of fluid frames,
We entered from somewhere.
Borders now perfumed a feeling of fresh
ease, haste without goals.
We proceeded past straight lines of tired road-kill,
a strange series of milestones.
Turning left, to as tired a tract of land,
Latvia was here.
And here, sleep was ready.

That evening we were pedalling ourselves along the quiet roads that link southern Estonia and Latvia. As we passed neat farms and telegraph poles the air felt thin enough to lift us up.

The anthropologist Tim Ingold differentiates between two types of movement, calling them *transport* and *wayfaring*. *Transport* bears qualities of goals where locations are defined and aimed for. In contrast, *wayfaring* has a nomadic and intuitive character; more a way of following your nose. As Ingold describes ‘the task of the wayfarer ... is not to act out a script received from predecessors but literally to negotiate a path through the world.’

As an artistic collaboration, *Go Happen* creates experiences that explore the interrelationship of human perceptions and ecologies. Our practice walks this path of ongoing negotiation between ourselves and place. This happens through methods of devising that emphasise a *knowing* based on embodied movement and listening. It is an approach that is open to surprises.

The projects we developed are realised in diverse forms of immersion and expedition: these have included a three-month bicycle ride from Tallinn in the north of Estonia to Minsk, Belarus. The navigator was the Baltic Chain, one of the largest and most significant peaceful protests of its time, while the Baltic States were seeking independence from the Soviet Union. Along this route we camped wild in woodlands and stayed with local people we met along the way. This gave us a chance to listen deeply and engage with the places we were moving through, increasingly guided by the feedback and alignment with our exterior and interior conditions.

Although we have exhibited writing and photographs from this expedition, its main influence has been to imbue our practice with a trust in ‘chance’ encounters and with a curiosity into the multiplicity of senses that life can be lived through and find meaning in.

Such curiosities have inspired an interpretation of the folktale *Baba Yaga*, which in particular explored the themes

of food and the night imagination in Vasilisa’s journey into the forest. This was animated through an immersive theatre production that included a live band, dancing in the dark and a five-course meal threaded into the evening. A fundamental intention with this project was also to bring attention to the network of local and organic food suppliers in southeast Cornwall.

In these creations we are interested in how an ecological literacy can initiate dialogue and new orientations in perceiving our immediate environments. The most recent of these was *The Slow Triathlon*, a way which followed the flow of the River Dart in Devon from Dartington down to Bow Creek. A triathlon format of travel provided a structure as the group cycled, rowed and walked along the river. This sport’s structure was then contrasted through a prioritising of quality of experience over quality of pace – the intention being that the present state of each place is felt through our *wayfaring* movement, rather than being set on the next locations.

Experimenting with participatory journeys as structures to devise with offers the potential to wrestle with what such a structure can be. They can provide hints at beginnings and endings, but they can also bring attention to the moment, so that an experience can be felt as legitimate without a direct sense of narrative. These journeys possess aliveness in movement and are affected by nomadic qualities of flow and our framings that contain them.

We believe as the artist and philosopher Manuel De Landa says, “that there is a need to engage with the creativity of the Earth, and [to] follow the lines of flight we uncover, exploring ‘the potential for self-organization inherent in even the humblest forms of matter-energy’”. This engagement requires in many cases a re-orientation between self and place, to feel the relationship between different forms of life and to our own faculties of sensing. Fully embodied experiences of movement within an environment are opportunities for the leakiness between the human organism and the earth organism to be felt. They form unusual and unique spaces for reminding us that we are ourselves involved in the nature we describe”.

(Ingold, 2011: 162) (De Landa in Dodds, 2011: 199) (Prigogine and Stengers, 1985: 364)

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