A Brush with the Land

Proceedings of a workshop organised by the Countryside Recreation Network and held at Grizedale Forest Park, Cumbria

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Proceedings from a workshop held at Grizedale Forest Park, Cumbria on 16 & 17 May 1995

SO, WHAT USE IS ART ANYWAY?

John Fox

Welfare State International, Engineers of the Imagination

INTRODUCTION

In my talk, ''What use is art anyway?' I will propose that art is a way of thinking, and a way of living essential to our future, and that it is fundamental to any vital culture. As Stephen Dorrell, the Minister of Fun, put it at the opening of the Year of Visual Art at the Tate Gallery last week:

"There is no such thing as rational economic man; when all the bankers are dead, art and poetry will remain and we will be remembered for this legacy."

Art is commonly contained or marginalised by re-defining it in the language of leisure, entertainment, interpretation, education, therapy, or decoration, and offering it as another commodity to tourists, or another way of creating jobs. Although it can overlap these areas it has a much more central and radical role in our existence. In the everyday vernacular end of the spectrum it is about what we value and how we celebrate our lives, whether this be in building our houses, naming our children, announcing partnerships, burying our dead or celebrating key moments of change in rites of passage, whether these be public or private, seasonal or random.

At the other end of the line it stretches the edges of perception, giving us insights into normally unseen worlds. This is the gateway to the soul, where we can explore our deepest intuitions, the sacred in the everyday, the fact of death and many metaphysical notions in between.

I also want to challenge easy assumptions about urban and rural. Art crosses all these arbitrary geographical boundaries. It may be easier to find in the countryside. A connection to elemental rhythms and energies can be more apparent in natural landscape but in the city there may be more pressures to reveal our inner rawness.

THE QUESTIONS

When Wordsworth published his poem about the River Duddon in 1820 he wrote:

"Child of the clouds! remote from every taint
Of sordid industry thy lot is cast."

One hundred and sixty years later Norman Nicholson, the nationally acclaimed poet who lived all his life in Millom, pointed out in his poem "On the dismantling of Millom Ironworks" just how wrong Wordsworth could be:

"..at the river's mouth, the Hodbarrow miners
Kicked up mountainous mole-hills; a conifer copse of chimneys
Criss-crossed the west with spikes and laterals, and landslides of limestone".

In 1968 the Hodbarrow Mines were filled in, and it is now once again a wildlife haven and a reserve of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. A salutary lesson when it comes to predicting any shift between rural and urban cultures.

By coincidence in 1968, as the mines of Hodbarrow were being taken apart, we were starting Welfare State International. As a company of artists dedicated to exploring creativity on a circuit outside the mainstream, we have now honed our vision over nearly three decades. The spectrum of that 27 years spans the sublime optimism of the late sixties and early seventies via the market-nosed hysteria of the eighties to recession to now.

Between 1983 and 1990 we did most of our work in Barrow-in-Furness. Only 150 years ago, Barrow was a village of 200 people until thanks to coal, iron and shipbuilding, it became an industrial metropolis. Now after the end of the cold war the town is in decline. In three years the shipyard has shed 10,000 jobs and soon the Trident submarine programme will end. When in desperation to attract the tourist trade the Mayoress serves tea during guided walks around the Town Hall you know the Industrial Revolution and the nineteenth century are truly over.

There was an article in the local paper on Saturday about a young man who was made redundant three years ago, who is struggling his way through the adult learning industry.

"I am determined to improve my skills and get a better job in the leisure and tourism industry" he says, but "I find learning about leisure is really hard work".

A sad paradox when learning about leisure is hard work. After all, playing should be easy and has been for countless previous tribes who once used their accumulated surplus to buy time, have fun and celebrate their very short lives.

The young man in Barrow and indeed many of our senior politicians, including Tony Blair, still believe full paid employment is possible. Work is defined as a job and the work ethic prevails over the alternative idea of occupying one's time fruitfully. There is also talk about community (usually when the community has gone), but still in terms of containment or economic identity, rarely in terms of a new way of life, or a new way of passing time.

Over the weekend on 'Later with Jools Holland' (Channel Four), we watched Courtney Love (the so-called grunge goddess from Seattle) and the next day walked to a 17th century Cruck Barn near the Duddon above Broughton Mills.

The contrast in community and values could not have been more extreme. The solid three hundred year old barn was built with a precise sense of place, constructed with oak trusses near to the spot where they were felled and walled with limestone from under its field. Like haystacks used to be it is both a work of art and an art of work rooted totally in a specific geography and social structure which would be unthinkable in today's high tech farming industry.

But also in Broughton Mills, as in Barrow-in-Furness and in Seattle for that matter, television and the press have great power. So Courtney Love's electronic image of narcissistic despair with its commercialised nihilism of cocaine, tobacco and sadistic sexual excess gives an identity to thousands of young people who are seriously confused with no work, no place and no hope. Be they in Grungeville or Grizedale.

An owl flew into the Duddon barn. The original builders had left a carefully fashioned slot under the eaves. Owls have used this entry for three hundred years. I am wondering where will our children and grandchildren be if we don't discover an equally significant entry. A new way of doing things, a new pattern which gives us all an identity, whether our roots are in the country or the city.

The name of this pattern is Art.

CONCLUSION

Perceive globally
create locally.
Make a bridge
of sequins.

And if the bridge costs
money
—build it with
sticks and stones.

CODA

Stepping Stones

As a diviner senses water underground
so the builder constructs a staircase of stone.
Each making their own pathway

Between hand and work
body and spirit
time and place.

So we will construct stepping stones
across diverse currents;
to focus for an instant
on luxuriant lichen,
where lime-green dragonflies
flicker on the fading doubts
of Chernobyl in Cumbria.

On the edge of this poison sea
we are determined to devise
a haven for dreams made concrete.
A clearing in the uncertain storm,
where windmills of the imagination
will gain a filigree hold
on the industrial debris of death.

So the ancient beck below
may flow
to every room.
Stirring and shining
inside domestic hollows of
hand-crafted discovery.

Ripple on ripple
Stone on stone.
Forming a new pool
of creation.

John Fox, who is the founder of Welfare State International, is also a woodcut printmaker, poet and a lecturer on radical aspects of culture.

INTO THE WOODS

David Farmer

Artistic Director, Tiebreak Touring Company

INTRODUCTION

Tiebreak was established as a Theatre in Education or 'TIE' company in 1981, producing plays on a range of themes. Over a third of our forty productions have been commissioned by external agencies, including the National Trust, Museums Services and Health Authorities. Most of our early work was devised by the company members and now we produce a mixture of new writing, adaptation or devising. Our work is targeted at specific age-ranges and each play is accompanied by a Teachers' Resource Pack.

A few years ago, Tiebreak was commissioned by the Natural History Museum to produce a play related to a Rainforest art exhibition. The resulting piece combined theatre and live music, mime and storytelling and was entitled 'Singing in the Rainforest'. It was performed for three weeks at The Natural History Museum and the following tour included performances to public and school audiences in Thetford Forest. As a result, Forest Enterprise decided to produce a new play tailored to their own objectives. This was 'Touchwood', which toured last year to 12 forest sites and again this year to forests and parks in Norfolk, Virginia, Norfolk, England and other locations in the UK.

SINGING IN THE RAINFOREST

In the spring of 1990, four actor/musicians and myself spent three and a half weeks at the Natural History Museum devising stories, playing with ideas and experimenting with music and design on the theme of Rainforests. The musical director brought in his collection of instruments from around the globe and the designer brought in a dome tent, for a scene about some explorers in the rainforest. The resulting piece uses a mixture of storytelling, mime, vaudeville and rap music to tell the story of a strange creature under threat by man. The dome tent makes a star appearance, not as a tent at all, but is used cleverly by the actors to represent forest flora and fauna ranging from butterflies to turtles.

This successful production was booked up by the Unicorn Theatre in the West End and by six festivals in the USA and Canada. Like 'Touchwood', the play featured plenty of audience participation. It lasts for about 40 minutes and because of its visual and musical qualities, is suitable for a wide age-range from 5-12 years, with an optimum audience size of 150–250. 'Singing in the Rainforest' is touring the USA next May and will be touring schools, forests and festivals in the UK during June and July.

TOUCHWOOD

When Forest Enterprise decided to put on their own play, they contacted their Regional Arts Board, Eastern Arts, to outline the project's aims, discuss the likely costs and to select a company to produce the play. As a result, Eastern Arts decided to jointly fund the project and Tiebreak was chosen as the producer.

There followed meetings between Tiebreak and Forest Enterprise representatives to discuss the objectives in greater detail. Although 'Singing in the Rainforest' had been devised by the actors and myself, we decided in this instance to use an established children's writer, Diane Redmond to script the piece.

The next stage was to meet with the writer and for her to come up with a synopsis and first and second drafts of the script, each of which was discussed and revised. During this period it was decided to use live music in the piece and further funding from Eastern Arts enabled us to commission a composer, with the apt name of Kenny Forrest.

In the autumn of 1993, Ana Chylak and Fiona Simpson from Forest Enterprise, worked on the site bookings. Later, work began on the Teachers' Pack provided for every school, as well as the design for leaflets and posters. Once the first draft of the script had been completed, I was able to commission a set designer and to audition the actors. Meetings took place with representatives from the sites which had booked, to discuss the practicalities of the performance. Rehearsals took three weeks and the tour visited twelve sites, in June and July 1994, with 57 performances taking place over eight weeks.

The finished 45 minute play tells the story of Touchwood, a mischievous forest sprite and his counterpart Maia, Goddess of the Hawthorn and their battle to save the forest from the return of Grendel, Hound from Hell. This is achieved with the help of forest animals, some played by the actors and others played by the audience, who bring their own animal masks and are able to help with a magic spell. A star appearance is made by Packawallop, a puppet Tree Harvester. The theme of multi-purpose forestry is carefully interwoven into the story so that the final result is artistic rather than pedantic. The four actors sing and play instruments as well as performing a variety of roles.

When we organised our tour we were very careful not to skimp on the practicalities. Forest Enterprise set up regional meetings for us to meet organisers, discuss our requirements and to anticipate problems. These were some of the issues raised, obviously relating particularly to performance art and as perceived from a theatre company's point of view;

• *Site-visits:*
We made a point of visiting every site several weeks before the tour. It gave us a chance to meet the organisers and to discover the unique problems of each site. We found we could cope with most environments as long as we knew about their individual characteristics beforehand.

• *Staging*:
If you are presenting a performance based piece, will it need a solid, flat base, or will it be OK if the performers trip over the odd tree root? This could be a car park which can be dressed with branches and plants if it looks too urban, or it could be a specially constructed stage. Ours was 20' by 20' and was either shared between sites who arranged the transportation or made it from scratch. Some sites are now making their own permanent amphitheatres.

• *Auditorium*:
What is the optimum size of audience for the type of activity? How large a space will the audience require? What will they sit on? Coats or blankets are practical, but how about hay-bales, which provide an opportunity to pre-arrange the seating pattern as well as an instant rustic atmosphere.

• *Wet weather contingency*:
Do you have a friendly school or village hall in the locality? At what point will you make the decision to move to the alternative space?

• *Utilities*:
Toilets, washing facilities and beverages are essential for well-oiled and sweet-smelling performers.

• *Preparation on the day*:
How long will the performers need to set up?

• *Overnight security*:
Who will look after the scenery or carefully arranged amphitheatre? If you are particularly worried you might choose to camp there as did one of the organisers on last year's tour!

• *Publicity and marketing:*

You can never do enough publicity, but it is also essential that the organisers sit down and talk to the artists and put in a lot of careful thought at the planning stage. The earlier the better; deadlines always get pushed back. You might need leaflets, posters, targeted mailing lists, media contacts, photographs.

• *Stewarding*:

This was usually covered by staff from each site, plus visitors from other sites who were able to help out whilst seeing the show and noting practical problems for themselves.

• *Logistics*:

Arranging a national tour which also meets the demands of the actors' union, Equity is not a simple task and will require consultation with the theatre company.

• *Contract*:

If you are working with a professional company it is essential that you make out a contract. If nothing is written down beforehand, then after the event, each side may well have very different interpretations of what was agreed.

• *Other activities*:

In order to make full use of the day, each forest site organised their own timetable so that schools undertook related games and activities. The Teachers' Pack was distributed before the visit, along with a cassette of the music from the play.

• *Funding*:

This is becoming harder and harder to obtain, but it is still worth talking to your Regional Arts Board to find out if they have pockets of money to help with your event. This must be done well in advance.

David Farmer is the Artistic Director of Tiebreak Touring Theatre

STORYING NATURE

Malcolm Green

Country Park Manager and professional storyteller

I had a cheetah in the bushes in the bottom of my suburban garden. It was a magic cheetah and could soar through the air and take me and my friends on amazing journeys and adventures to the ends of the earth and beyond, from the plains of wild Africa to the frozen arctic, and outer space! It was also secret, Chi Chi's lair was adult free. In fact the day he died was when at the age of elven I told my mother who I was playing with and she replied in a voice that rings in my ears to this day: "Malcolm! aren't you a bit old for that?" My mother was always very keen that I made a children's newspaper like the boy across the road.

Chi Chi has returned to my garden now but there was a long hibernation as I waged war with children's newspapers!

The newspaper approach really started at secondary school and university. I did Biology there, hoping to be filled up with more of this wondrous stuff called life. To get a glimpse behind the magic of all those things which made me bubble with excitement: the quivering red tail of the redstart emerging from the lush early morning green; my wonderful alter ego of a dog ruthlessly murdering coots on the ice of a frozen pond; the chattering goldfinches that hung upside down on the thistles in the local graveyard; the skylarks that sang higher and higher into the blue until they could be a midge or a mosquito and then made suicide dives toward the ground.

We didn't really study life at university, we studied bits of life. Some of the information was fascinating but on the whole it lacked wonder and the study of life was somehow lifeless. We looked so hard at the parts, we never saw the whole and the neat graphs and statistics never quite fit with the wild, unkempt, imaginative world of nature I knew.

As a slightly more grown up being I know the value of the understanding and insight that science gives us, but without stories, which give us the wonder of the world, there is no heart and it lacks meaning. Chi Chi re-emerged for me at the age of 27 when he took me to Cameroon in West Africa where I lived for four years. In Cameroon I met an old man, Ba Njingum, who was the head of the Njange or drinking house I went to. Ba Njingum came from a long line of blacksmiths and was a man of magic. His ancestral grandfather of seven generations past came down from the sky on a strand of spider's silk and landed at an area called Sama, not far from the Fon's (chief's) palace. He brought with him the ability to make iron from rock and so transformed

the society. Ba Njingum was the head of a very secret society, whose job it was to clear bad magic from the land at the start of each planting season.

I learnt much from that Njange house about a magical world (in which people could transform into pythons, and chameleons could be used to send thunder), which merged effortlessly into the more concrete, 'rational' world, which we are more familiar with.

It was also a world in which the stories of people's lives were hooked very much into nature and the landscape. Ba Njingum, like most people, had a sacred tree in his compound. The tree was a place of communication with the ancestors and was where family ceremonies and sacrifices were performed. People's lives started and ended with the tree. It was the place where birth celebrations were performed and a branch of the tree accompanied the dead when they were buried. Like the sacred tree of many other cultures, it was a species of fig, which the village people called a Wopnji tree. They always carried a cutting of it with them, whenever they moved house.

In addition to these large mythical stories, the place was full of folk tales that were told and sung by all ages with great humour and energy around the fires at night.

I found myself living in a place where stories and the imaginative world were part of the everyday reality. Something which is not given much credence or voice in our industrialised societies. There are of course negative as well as positive connotations here, as they can be used as instruments of fear as well as enlightenment. But for me I felt as if I was offered a gift. To this day I'm not sure what it was, like most stories it is intangible. Somewhere it is to do with the spirit, but whatever it was, it set me on the journey of stories and the telling of them as being the only way of expressing that intangible thing I had discovered.

Chi Chi's eyes flashed with fire.

Ironically when I returned to Cameroon 12 years later, a 'fully fledged' storyteller, I found myself meeting up in a bar with some of the former pupils of the school I had worked in and telling them some of the very stories I had gleaned from Cameroon those few years before. They were rivetted and wanted more and more, but for them the stories had gone, there was not a single whole folktale they could remember to give me in exchange. The communities had been gobbled up by TV and coca cola culture and the stories had lost their currency. To echo the sentiments of Joseph Campbell, perhaps this is the challenge: To find a new context and sense for the story that gives back a heart and common identity to whichever part of the global village we inhabit today.

The starting place for this has to be to give room to the boundless imaginative world. Nature has to be the greatest inspiration for this, full of danger and mystery. In England, however, I suspect there are not so many children who have dens in the woods, let alone cheetahs.

The constraints are growing. The wild areas are disappearing or being tidied up. Cars and roads cut the world up into fragments. Frightened parents fear the hand of the mugger or abuser. TV and video games lure children into the warmth of the indoors. Even the countryside is often managed and 'looked after' and the secret places have gone.

So for many children, their primary experience of nature is cleansed and filtered through the medium of television, which informs but doesn't bite or stink or make you muddy. It only gives you second hand stories and not a great sense of belonging or identification with the world around.

I have worked in a country park for the last eight years. It is relatively easy to inform: a talk, a set of instructions, a few worksheets, a guided tour, even a bit of investigation or enquiry work. The children are used to it, it's what they do most of the time at school, and like much of education nature has become hijacked by the analytic, particularly in this age of Information Technology. This is, however, only part of the story. If we look back to our own childhoods, it is the exploration, the adventure, the fear and the wonder, the world of the imagination, which really mattered. It was that which affected our feelings about the wild world around us. It is also that which is being denied, as the opportunities for entering that world both physically and psychologically are disappearing. This therefore is the starting point for bringing the story and imagination back into the environmental education.

There is of course a contradiction here, Chi Chi's lair was secret, it was adult free. The very nature of adventure and the imagination is that it is unknown and unstructured.

I do believe, however, that through the arts there is an opportunity to open the door to a little magic even in this more formal world.

In the Country Park we have been working with stories and storytelling in everything: from guided walks to environmental investigations; from playschemes to celebratory events. We have found magic there, and we have also found a chink of light into a world of unknown possibilities.

"It is not half so important to know as to feel. If facts are the seeds that later produce knowledge and wisdom, then the emotions and the impressions of the senses are the fertile soil in which the seeds must grow." (The Sense of Wonder, Rachel Carson 1965).

The first stories I used in environmental education came very much from my own scientific tradition. They were for delivering a message. I made them up to add a bit of interest to my explanation of why we should plant trees, or to provide stimulus for a group to embark on a certain activity or investigation. The stories grew, for children listened and remembered them. They sang me back the songs.

Sometimes they didn't stay with the story when they were involved in activities outside, but every now and then a story character would appear amongst the minibeasts or in the undergrowth.

The story added that touch of magic and mystery and made a bridge between the material world of bustle and noise they had just left and the new world of the countryside. It sensitised the children and let them know that it was alright to dream and slip into another way of seeing for a bit.

These created or semi-created stories have grown to become the backbone of playschemes and other events. Most of our playschemes, which last for six consecutive days start with a story that lays down a challenge or starts a quest. Through the imaginative process that follows, everything is possible and anything can happen. Children will invariably make dens, explore the landscape and create some kind of celebration. Tribes will get formed, conflicts will arise, peace will be struck and someone will steal someone else's bar of chocolate! What is essential is that the stories grow and develop in the hands of children. The story encourages an identification and gives the playscheme a sense of direction.

On another level stories are used to put children in a role where they are the experts. Such as the story which arose out of the meeting with the 'blind seer' where it became the children's job to show the adults (in role as busy business types) the way around the woods to a point where they know enough about them to discover their own special tree. The children, who had very little knowledge of the countryside, became empowered by the story and told the adults not to touch nettles and which way to stroke pine cones—becoming curious and discovering new things as they went.

Stories have become integral to public events. Often combined with music, a little ritual and other arts activities.

Many people want to mark events in the annual calendar—to break the gloom of coming winter with the Halloween fires, to celebrate the height of summer with feasting and music. Storytelling can form the heart of these events. Halloween for example gives an opportunity for the telling of ghost stories which range from the scary joke to ones that touch the mystery of the old celtic Samhain festival. Hollywood images of the 20th century merge with what rituals we can glean from our ancient past. And people come, 500 and more to sit around the fires, be scared by ghosts and listen to the stories of times past and times future.

Stories, fires, music and making activities form the core of these seasonal celebrations and for a couple of hours people are drawn together from all classes, ages and backgrounds to form part of a little community out of their houses that has no overt message other than some relationship with the sky and stars and woods around them. Unlike the frenetic bang of most fireworks events, the simple structure with a beginning, middle and end means that the group makes a journey together and hopefully leaves with some sense of completion.

Most places have legends of things past and some have kept up the lineage of an old celebration. We, like others, have revived old stories as the basis of community events, with wild extravaganzas of creativity with costumes, music-making, community storytelling and lanterns.

One very special event is the Moonraking, that takes place at Slaithwaite, in Yorkshire each year, where the revival of this old folktale has really caught the imaginations of the local people and bring hundreds to the ritual of raking the moon out of the river each year.

At the Rising Sun Country Park, we have not yet found a suitable local legend and taken an old fenland story: 'the dead moon' as the basis of a winter event, in which we have transcribed the fenland fairy folk into the boggarts of a North East setting. Each year, the moon (a huge lantern) is raised up from the clutches of the boggarts (illuminated sculptures made by armies of children and parents) which are arrayed around the wood.

The appetite for stories is growing, or perhaps it never went, but I have been consistently surprised by the numbers of people who come to simple evening story and music sessions at the country park. The space needs to be made special, whether indoors or out. People need to be given time to both listen and relax. They do not need to be battered with too much too fast but be offered just enough story so there is something to savour, laugh at or ponder on with a friend as the beer slips down.

The creating of stories is a rich area. On the simplest level people may tell their own personal stories of brave, fearsome, playful, or quiet encounters with nature offered up by their memories. Many people have a special tree that they remember from their childhood that was in some way significant: "a place I used to go when I was sad", "there was a throne in my tree where I used to sit and be a king over the land", "I had a little sapling I planted from a seed and we carried with us whenever we moved house, which was quite a lot. Its a big tree now".

We all need our own secret places. City children very often have theirs, under a bed, in a closet, or simply in their minds. The countryside provides opportunities for them to find truly wondrous secret places. The children need to be acclimatised first, to look, to see to use their imaginations—and what better than a wonder tale to launch them into this world and free their minds. Then they will find them—those secret places under overhanging trees, deep in the brambles or surrounded by nettles. There will be old sandals, broken bottles and other fertile stuff for the imagination. Here the stories will bubble up as the branches creak and they see faces in the trees. They might be guarded by magical forces, whisked off on wild adventures, meet strange creatures, or taken back in time.

It is a sign of the times that so many city children ask as they leave, "are we allowed back?" "Do we have to pay?" The countryside is no longer their natural inheritance. They need to regain it.

Creating stories from nature demands that we really look at what is around us. Trees are wondrous things, the shapes, faces and characters of trees, set imaginations going. We get musical trees, rejected trees, female trees. Trees that are passing through to another land, trees that harbour demons and criminals. From these images stories grow that are a fusion of peoples own life experiences and what they see around them and what comes out of them can be breathtaking.

Use of stories has very much evolved and grown for me as I have worked more and more as a storyteller and listened to other storytellers. The richness and textures of the traditional oral tale has led me down new paths. Many of the tales express in subtle and many-layered ways, people's relationship not only with one another but the natural world they inhabit. They are at once both entertaining and revealing. Stories come at us from all cultures of the world, with different pieces of wisdom and their own beauty and rhythm.

I see story telling now having a role in its own right, without having to convey an obvious environmental truth or message.

I started this article with Chi Chi, my own childhood creation. I'd like to end it with creation stories themselves. Those big stories about beginnings and endings, about who we are and why we are here, about the heaven the earth and the stars, about the origins of the plants and animals and all life on earth.

Stories as wild and wonderful as the variety of life itself, from Ymir to Coyote, from Jesus to Rangi, from Ragnarock to the Big Bang.

Stories which start with nature and are full of mystery and strange happenings, love and revenge. Stories which have been corrupted by institutionalised religion and to a large extent lost their currency with young people these days. By bringing some magic back into these old stories of our ancestors there is a wonderful stimulus for our adolescents, who have big questions themselves, to look again at the sky, the plants, the rocks, the trees, to see the faces and endings, of whats, whys and hows—and maybe out of them a new story will emerge, a story for all of us, who knows?

Malcolm Green is the manager of the Rising Sun Country Park owned by North Tyneside Council and situated just outside Newcastle.

The country park is 400 acres of land reclaimed from a former colliery, which in its day was one of the largest coal mines in Britain. The colliery closed in 1970 and is now managed for the benefit of the dense human populations which live in its immediate vicinity. Much of the project is about healing in one way or the other. Large areas of the land are polluted or despoiled, many of the people round about are unemployed and disenfranchised. Slowly the land is regaining in health and now the place is made up of woodlands, a lake and an organic farm. The former wagonways are the footpaths and bridleways.

The park is interested in involvement and participation by local people and the use of stories has been one of the key elements of this.

HOW MUCH MORE CAN BE ACHIEVED BY USING AN ARTISTIC APPROACH?

Alasdair Urquhart

Painter

Most people tend to think of art as elitist and not relevant to them, the "what's it got to do with me" attitude is prevalent. Yet art, the making of images was, and is, one of our most basic forms of communication. Art draws on the rhythms of nature. Since the earliest days, artists have shown the soul of nature to us, connecting us with the spirit of its many moods—thus when ancient man made marks on the cave walls, it was to reveal the mysteries of life as well as its practicalities, the need for interdependence and community in daily life if they were to survive, let alone thrive—vital reasons indeed for invoking in man the need to co-operate for the common good.

We have much to learn from indigenous cultures. In aboriginal society which preceded western cave man art by at least 10,000 years, people only took what they needed to sustain life. They had elaborate rituals and myths, they worked with the cycles of nature. Individually they were rounded—capable of telling stories, making music and images in a unique, creative interaction with life and the cosmos—truly a high culture.

That we are still failing to understand the need for creative interaction in our society and the cultural and behavioural benefits that accrue from the nurturing of the uniqueness in each individual is manifestly displayed by two recent reports—the first by the Rowntree Foundation, highlights the spiritual and behavioural poverty which is growing exponentially in our society. The second by the Royal Society of Arts, describes the increasing marginalisation of the arts in children's lives, through the severe cuts to artists in schools schemes, music services, concert and theatre visits. Whether it is by accident or design, the effects are the same—our youngsters are being denied the celebratory skills of life with which they can play a full participatory role in our society. Our children are the future! Unless they are nurtured and esteemed through the arts, then the present poverty in behavioural standards will continue to spiral downwards. The arts celebrate all the senses giving the body balance and harmony and the soul and mind a sense of belonging. Art works on the inner as well as the outer senses. To deprive our youth of such fundamental needs speak volumes for the values of our leaders and the depth of our disease with ourselves and the natural world. The National Lottery (regardless of my own misgivings on gambling) should have brought large sums of money into arts education, the resulting benefits to the future cultural

and social well-being of the individual and society would have been immense, yet barely a pittance comes through this source.

The development of the unique creative individualism of each of our children should be axiomatic to our educational system. For once a child is nurtured to develop their intuitive creative faculties, they have a centredness, a true sense of self esteem and worth, allied to a wholesome self discipline, they open their minds to innocence, and the beginnings of an intelligence unhindered by social conditioning or patterning comes forth. They have the capacity through the artistic mind, of design, building, repairing, growing, healing—an awareness, an expansiveness, to roam freely and without prejudice—these skills are needed more than ever.

In the natural world, the function of each organism is to realise its fullest potential—that is its fundamental ethos. When we look around at our society, how many people do we see living to their fullest potential? We have a need and a duty to create a society in which each one of us has a chance to develop their creative abilities to the fullest, in a caring, nurturing environment. The importance of bringing people to the countryside is a crucial part in the re-awakening to a more natural way of life. We need to re-define our vision of how we each wish the world to be—for our world is perishing through this very lack.

In the west, civilisations have come and gone, "forests preceding them, deserts following them," Greek, Roman, Byzantine—and now our own! "You are left with something like a skeleton, ravaged by disease"—an echoing comment on deforestation by Plato 2,500 years ago! Trees are axiomatic to our future in providing habitat, food, and air; in their prevention of soil erosion and the maintaining of water tables, without which communities cannot survive—they are the balance of nature itself! We have continually and perversely misunderstood their primary function in maintaining life. Through our arrogant subjugation of nature and the exclusive espousal of logic, we have condemned ourselves to an artificial twilight world in which the only certainty is increasing alienation from nature in dis-functional unfulfilled lives.

There is a need for people to become aware, to see their vital role in the chain of life and the connectedness of all things. We live in a society which has become dis-connected through the worship of technology, where technocrats speak of "consuming nature in order to make wealth". Little wonder an Indian was moved to say:

"And when you have cut down the last tree, killed all the wildlife and fish, when you have fouled all the rivers and oceans, are you going to eat money?"

Technology has got a place but it must be used with wisdom!

In the west we are on an orgy of greed and destruction of irreplaceable natural life support systems—that 1/5th of the world's population should be denying the other 4/5ths in an unsustainable lifestyle is unthinkable—yet we are doing it. Even more unbelievably we are driven to extend this lifestyle to all humankind! Why are we doing this? The "everything must be bigger and better" ethos of conspicuous consumption? If it was demonstrable that it made people more contented and happy, encouraged personal freedom and justice in a sustainable future, then I could see the point of our so-called progress but this is manifestly not the case! It doesn't have to be like this and thankfully there is a growing awareness of the futility of our present technocratic world view.

It all comes back to education—when we teach our children respect and love for nature through arts we embrace all of life, otherwise how can children ever develop a meaningful dialogue with nature and heal the disease which pervades society? Very young children have an insatiable curiosity about life and their place in the environment. Einstein liked to call them "true geniuses"; yet without empathy and nurturing from their parents they become suppressed and frustrated and the creative spark within is dimmed if not quenched.

Consider the importance of creative play—for children and adults alike in a natural setting, interacting in an atmosphere of mutual respect. In learning new skills together, painting, making objects and music, telling stories, having fun—they develop a new respect for themselves, others and for the environment. This plays a very important part in keeping the creative spark fanned in our children and adults alike. In bringing out their latent artistic talents we stretch them as people and create the dynamics for a better world. Through close observation of the natural world they see the infinite diversity of structure, form and content in nature. Through its essential interaction and synthesis, growth and change, it connects us to our own internal rhythms, cultivates our sense of naturalness and wonder at the abundance within and around us. Art must mirror and echo these resonances, reveal its extraordinary variety through colour and light in a manner which touches for all, the universalness of life, the healing capacity of art and nature.

Technology as a means to a better future has been the clarion cry this century—yet the global agony of the world wars and the birth of nuclear power and the possibility of global destruction does not augur well for our future. In 1965 Lyndon Johnson declared war on poverty in the U.S. and since then they have spent trillions of dollars—more than the cost of World War II in real terms, yet all it seems to pay for is an increase in socially retarded behaviour, cultural poverty, as well-fed gangs in the latest designer gear, fight it out on street corners. Family life is fragmented, with rocketing illegitimacy rates, with many children having no parental figure of authority to relate to, no role model—they become increasingly alienated in society, with no real jobs or hope for the future. In our 'sink' estates in Britain, a similar pattern is emerging, despite them having more consumer goods than the surtax payers in Attlee's time!

Educationalists and politicians are missing the point; they want to manage society, yet they don't seem to understand what people need, which is creative self-worth and real work; neither point is really addressed. As people need to use their brains and muscles less, as computers and robots marginalize them, they feel neither needed or wanted. This leads to torpor in the individual—this malaise is transmitted from adult to child, seeing life has little meaning and society no respect for them, drives them to the fringes of society—isolated and alienated. We cannot allow this to happen any longer. Art has a fundamental role in addressing this lack in parent and child. To live life fully one must involve all the senses, moving with natural rhythms. Art has the capacity to reveal universal truths which awaken the individual to interest and curiosity and helps give them a clearer picture of life. As individuals awaken to the truths within themselves, it helps to link them with the world around them and their essential place within that world.

Since the 60s, there has been a retreat from modernism. In art this insecurity has increasingly turned us to nature to look again for our roots, inspirations and reassurance. When we are in contact with nature we can more easily relate to our inner creative selves and through nature, the cosmos itself. The importance of environment in the physical/spiritual well-being of mankind is returning to the fore.

One of the joys in art is helping communities connect with the richness of their spiritual/cultural heritage. Through the development of their creative awareness, the individual can then be empowered to pick up their own chosen threads to weave into the present fabric of society, creating a better future, in doing so they become aware of their individual responsibility to themselves and to society—this gives them the strength to become self regulatory in monitoring the health and well being of our planet and its inhabitants. Through the encouragement of diverseness in these local cultures we create the diversity which is in nature—in developing a profound empathy with nature, we can embrace and empathise with the uniqueness of life—healing ourselves and our planet, becoming stewards to all.

It is a great joy to share with others something one cares about. Through this talk, if even only one or two people should benefit from a clearer vision of what they have to give, then that will be sufficient. It is through each one of us going forth and sharing our personal vision, for the betterment of all, that we each begin to redress the inequalities of balance in our society and move it into a more balanced nurturing mode. The need to trust and cooperate in this creative regenerative work is paramount.

I believe there is a creative spark within each one of us. A function of the artist is to ignite that spark—the light that is shed helps illuminate the way for themselves and others. Through this light we find that 'reality is a dream we share'. It is time for each one of us to creatively dream a more nurturing vision—for all creation.

Alisdair Urquhart is a painter interested in ecological and educational issues and has undertaken a residency at Grizedale. His work, which has been exhibited worldwide, has been published by Rosenstields Fine Art and Medici.

INTEGRATING ART WITH COUNTRYSIDE MANAGEMENT

Dick Capel

Countryside Officer, East Cumbria Countryside Project

When Catherine Etchell phoned to ask me to do this talk I agreed without any hesitation. After all I am currently very heavily involved with the development of quite a major sculpture proposal in the Eden Valley and I have, for as long as I can remember, been as passionate about the visual arts as I have about nature conservation and countryside management. As colleagues, past and present, will verify I'm always going on about integrating art with countryside management.

Then, however, I started to worry. Perhaps I'd been asked on the assumption that I'd actually *done* some integrating of art with countryside management when, in fact, I haven't because most of the time I'm too busy with countryside management on its own!

It's not that I haven't tried and one fairly ambitious attempt even failed quite spectacularly. Its just that art in the public domain doesn't come easy and if it did it probably wouldn't be art. It takes time and money and demands some very specialised skills to commission public art. As Lesley Greene will explain, the process can be very involved and complex. But I think about it a lot and I know what I like so I stopped worrying and decided to adopt an unashamedly eclectic approach.

My one fairly ambitious attempt at integrating art with countryside management, which failed quite spectacularly, occurred when I was working in the Yorkshire Dales National Park as an area warden. The attempt was made in an entirely private capacity but it never the less almost got me the sack!

I had known Andy Goldsworthy when he lived at Brough near Kirkby Stephen and I was probably one of his earliest fans. I lost touch when he moved to Dumfrieshire after his career took off powered by his 'spires' and 'sidewinder' phase at Grizedale. We met up again when the exhibition 'Artists in National Parks' came to Kendal which included work he'd done as Lake District Artist in Residence. He invited me to his home at Penpont, took me to see his 'Give and take wall' and expressed a wish to do another dry stone wall piece in the Yorkshire Dales.

No problem. I agreed to set it up. I knew a potentially sympathetic (and wealthy) landowner with just the right site and off I went to get it all organised. The landowner proved to be very enthusiastic (by coincidence and unbeknown to us, he was a friend of Andy's patron in Dumfrieshire) and I arranged for Andy and Joe Smith, his waller, to come down to Wensleydale.

Everything seemed to be progressing well. We still needed the money to do it so I embarked upon the fund raising which is where the really hard work starts and I drew a blank wherever I turned. Then disaster struck. An application to Richmondshire District Council was turned down amidst howls of derision from councillors whilst the local press had a field day with headlines like "wiggley wall grant plea ridiculous" and "Bizarre dry stone wall sculpture is set to bring art into the open". My clandestine part in the affair was exposed, linked overtly to my role as National Park Warden and a very dim view was taken subsequently by my bosses. It was all very sad although I know I was right and they were wrong. Andy had said of his proposal at the time:

> "A dry stone wall is an expression of the stone used and the landscape through which it travels. Walls follow the lie of the land—over hills, along ridges, down gullies, around outcrops of rock.....using the natural features of a landscape. I want to make a work that uses this sense of a line being in sympathy with place—one that goes around a tree rather than cutting the tree down.
> The wall will weave for about 250 yards.A tree will be planted in each fold. As the trees grow the relationship between tree and wall will become stronger.It will be made along the route of a derelict wall—linking up with the existing network of walls. I enjoy the idea of walls travelling both visually and physically—old walls becoming new—changing shape in the process of moving across a field."

It is not generally known that his wall in Grizedale Forest, 'the wall that went for a walk' actually started its journey as far away as Wensleydale!

Although I found a different venue and adapted its message 'the wall that went for a walk' remains, for me, not only a fine work of art but also a brilliant piece of countryside interpretation. We are all familiar with Freeman Tilden's statement "Interpretation is not instruction but provocation" and, in my view good art in the context of countryside management is virtually synonymous with interpretation.

It is essential, however, that the highest standards are maintained and I do not believe that integrating art with the environment is about indiscriminate decoration, for decorations sake, of countryside furniture or a kind of trendy customising exercise en-masse. As a countryside manager, who is also an art lover, I find myself becoming rather alarmed at the increasing tendency in countryside management circles to climb on a sort of corporate identity, bucolic folk art bandwagon.

East Cumbria Countryside Project is known for the way in which it integrates interpretation with its practical management work and a large part of the work relates to the public path network. By improving and waymarking public paths the project enables people to literally interact with the countryside environment more intimately and this alone constitutes part of the interpretative process which can then be extended and developed.

A comprehensive guided walks programme, and a series of circular walk booklets have been the project's mainstay, over the years, devised to encourage people to walk in the countryside and increase their knowledge, awareness and sensitivity. Whilst both these approaches continue to be effective and popular they tend to prioritise the acquisition of knowledge perhaps to the detriment of emotion and the senses and their appeal is restricted to people who like to follow a leader or written directions.

Zen Buddhism teaches that the name of an object is like a pane of dirty glass between the object and the viewer and in a sense the ultimate challenge for the countryside interpreter is to provide a window which is not only clean but invisible.

All too often conventional forms of interpretation intrude too much on people's own particular and unique experience of a place and invariably compound the encroachment with too many facts and figures and too little consideration for the aesthetic, sensual and cultural dimensions that are such a vital part of most people's relationships with the natural environment.

At one time I was a countryside interpreter in Hereford and Worcester and devoted much of my time to churning out numerous little interpretative panels which were sited at various points alongside paths in Country Parks. Although I did my best to avoid pedantic content by incorporating poetry and whimsical illustrations the physical presence of the panels themselves was a jarring imposition.

How much better in a woodland setting is Anthony Holloway's life cycle arch than a painted and letrasetted diagram of the food chain on a framed square board behind a vandal resistant polycarbonate sheet.

Another panel I did at the time depicted a commercially grown conifer laden with tables, chairs and cupboards but it didn't occur to me to do it for real! In Simon Lee's piece the basic message is clear but rendered subliminally like a still small voice within a huge bursting visual crescendo of energy activated by the collective abstract imagery of the chairs which transforms it into sculpture.

David Nash delves even deeper with his 'Running Table' (in my view, the unchallenged masterpiece in Grizedale) and 'Wooden Waterway' articulating the vibrant underlying magic of trees and woodland with staggering eloquence. Indeed his 'Wooden Waterway' even casts a spell on passing walkers who feel a compulsion to reconnect the sections and clear leaves from the channels thus ensuring a longevity for the sculpture, through a process of public participation, he hadn't anticipated.

Dragging myself away from Grizedale I'm next going to run into the arms of Common Ground and then the Forest of Dean and Sustrans. Grizedale and Common Ground are of course the undisputed flagships for art in the environment.

I haven't got many heroes but Sue Clifford of Common Ground definitely qualifies. It's virtually impossible to talk about this subject without repeating things she's already said and I quote her now:

> "Our ethical relations with nature, our ancient understandings of the land lead us to revalue our emotional engagement with places and all they mean to us. In its search to reassert the importance of liberating our subjective response to the world about us Common Ground has turned for philosophical help to artists who wear their emotions on their sleeve."

Artists are, of course, interpreters and artists who make site specific art in public places make art which is a physical distillation of their own subjective response to a place. In doing so they have the power to act as mediators for other people's interactions as well as their own.

Peter Randall-Page speaks volumes with his 'wayside carvings' in Dorset without any interpretative text or walk guide's narrative about the intimacy of human scale, evolution, geology, topography and yet, simultaneously and unobtrusively, confirms and celebrates our mutual 'emotional engagement' with the landscape.

Keith Smith could be telling a story with his carved railway sleepers in 'the Iron Road' although he says "there is no key which unlocks a precise narrative—the carvings are both allusive and illusive". He reminds us that art shouldn't always be safe or comfortable and that it is often the least immediately understood piece which constitutes the most powerful interpretative experience and goes on working in people's minds long after the initial encounter.

Richard Harris slices into the landscape itself along the sea to sea cycleway in Tyne and Wear with his 'Kyo undercurrent'. This piece makes references to the railway lines which came before and utilises huge blocks of railway bridge stone to solve a civil engineering problem sensitively with sweeping benched curves that contain and channel the air and envelop the cyclists and walkers as they pass through.

Since starting work with East Cumbria Countryside Project over two years ago my personal aspirations as an art and environmental integrationist have been better accommodated—even welcomed. Alic Bondi had laid some foundations over the years with story telling events, pageants and, most notably, a two week residency of the Company of Imagination.

Last year we commissioned the Cumbria based artist Jackie Scammell, who, as it happens, has an exhibition now at Grizedale following a six week studio residency, to take part in a woodland event organised to interpret the history of woodland management, from neolithic to modern times, incorporating both commercial and conservation aspects with demonstrations and

exhibitions, ranging from old crafts like chair bodging through to modern practices. Jackie describes herself as a painter, although her preferred medium is paper, and her paintings are responses to, rather than representations of, landscape and we wanted her to find a way of exploring the underlying spiritual aspects of people's relationship with woodland. We suggested an integrated paper sculpture would be especially appropriate both for its obvious connection with wood and in the way it relates to the ethereal qualities of woodland, perhaps often missing from the more usual branch and twig sculptures, and evoke a sense of being in touch with our primeval woodland origins.

We also asked her if she could include a participatory element on the day enabling visitors to add to the piece somehow, or in a collaborative way, to help in its assembly.

She responded magnificently and based her approach on ancient celtic rituals where trees were decorated or 'dressed' and the piece consisted of a number of large, brightly coloured handmade paper panels strung from the branches of an ancient oak tree. Each panel was pierced with holes and visitors were encouraged to attach coloured paper rags to a panel, under Jackie's guidance, with whittled hazel pegs.

It proved to be immensely popular with a constant stream of people visiting to attach a paper rag and return again and again to watch the piece grow.

And now I'm standing on the brink of yet another awfully big adventure which could yet evaporate before my very eyes. At least this time I have my bosses' support and under the auspices of Visual Arts UK 1996 a wider official context which might, just might, stimulate my fund raising efforts.

My proposal is called 'Eden Benchmarks' and the intention is to commission a series of carved stone sculptures, each by a different sculptor, which will function as seats at various dispersed locations alongside public paths on the banks of the River Eden. The emphasis will be on sculptures as seats rather than sculptured seats. The sculpture as a seat would appear to provide the perfect solution to the interpretative challenge of an invisible window. Each Benchmark will be intensely site specific and impart the sculptor's creative insight but ultimately the sitter's union with the piece, in the act of sitting, will shape and enhance their own experience of the surrounding landscape.

It is planned to have six or seven sculptures in place at strategic sites by the end of Visual Arts Year and further pieces, thereafter, subject to the availability of funding. I have calculated that each sculpture will cost approximately £6,000 a third of which is the artist's fee based on an eight weeks residency.

The money is now beginning to trickle in and the prospects are looking quite hopeful. Maybe next time I give this talk I'll have some things of my own to talk about!

Dick Capel is a Countryside Officer for the East Cumbria Countryside Project and was formerly a freelance public art agent.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT AT GRIZEDALE FOREST PARK

Brian Mahony

Forest District Manager, Forest Enterprise

Grizedale Forest Park occupies an area of 2500 hectares in South Lakeland. It is a public forest, owned by the Forest District and managed by Forest Enterprise. The estate was purchased in 1936 from the Brocklebank family for the sum of £40,000. We think that it was one of the best bargains ever struck on behalf of the nation! Forest Enterprise now carries on a tradition of woodland management dating back 900 years to the time of the Norman Conquest. Successive owners have made use of the forest resource to generate a diverse range of benefits from charcoal for iron smelting, to hunting, to feed for pigs, to timber for building construction and more recently for public recreation.

It is important to realise that the forest is much more than simply trees; although these are present in great number through the ancient oakwoods, the ornamental woodlands of Victorian times and the more recent plantations. Other key elements of the forest resource include: plantlife, animals and insects; physical features such as rock, soil and water; access routes; open space, including agricultural land; buildings; historical features; and people—either resident, workers or visitors. There are also the more abstract qualities such as solitude, remoteness, peace and quiet and so on.

Having recognised the nature of the total forest resource, we are then able to grasp the immense potential which it represents. It is the work of Forest Enterprise to unlock this potential in a balanced way which meets our objectives of:

- timber production (by far the major generator of income);

- public access for quiet recreation (began at Grizedale in the early 1960s)l;

- conservation of wildlife and the historic environment (began in 1956); and

- sympathetic management of the landscape (through the redesign of the forest).

Our management needs to adopt a multi-purpose approach if we are to get the best from the resource that we hold. The forest is very much a managed environment in which we plan very carefully at both a strategic level through Forest Design Plans and at an operational level through Site Plans. Every project must involve all disciplines. Partnerships with other organisations are of major importance, and in particular that with the Grizedale Society has been immensely successful. Grizedale has become an internationally important arts centre at the same time as maintaining its other functions.

Our guiding principles have been:

- to recognise and manage the total resource;

- to keep all of the developments and facilities focused on the forest as a natural and productive environment;

- to aim for the highest quality standards of both provision and service; and

- to always maintain a balance of activities so that Grizedale is not solely a timber factory or a sculpture park or a wildlife reserve or a public playground. It is in part all of these.

Grizedale Forest Park is now the second most popular visitor attraction within the Lake District National Park with over 350,000 day visitors each year coming to walk, cycle, orienteer and enjoy the wildlife and arts experience. At the same time it provides industry with 20,000 tonnes of timber, is home to a wide and increasing variety of plant and animal life and provides a unique working environment for artists.

We must always remember that the origin of Grizedale is basically as a coniferous forest planted for timber production, to which has been applied the inspiration and vision of a number of key individuals who recognised and sought to unlock its immense potential.

Forest Enterprise carries on this important task of managing all aspects of the forest, working closely with the Grizedale Society who devote their specialist expertise to running the arts complex.

Brian Mahony is a Forest District Manager with Forest Enterprise; he is based at Grizedale.

SOUNDS LIKE NATURE WORKSHOP: MUSIC FROM THE FOREST

Mike Wild

South Yorkshire Folk Network; Musician

"What you doin' you're makin' my bones all loose!" Jack Matthew, age 5.

The Workshop was focused on a performance which brought together a range of other workshop groups in the woods at dusk in the rain! We used it to explore sounds, rhythms and music making with particular reference to the natural and inner worlds.

WHAT IS SOUND USED FOR IN HUMAN COMMUNITIES IN THE CONTEXT OF THIS WORKSHOP?

• A holistic approach to internal, social and natural environment that is intuitive but can be learned within varied cultures;

• Expression, two way communication and making sense of 'chaos' and place in nature;

• Rhythms for moving, for beating fatigue and working;

• Sounds, stories, songs, dances, tunes;

• Personal and Social Functions.

• Joy of living, seasons, places, celebrations, rites of passage, catharsis, finding partners, soothing, assertion, aggression, 'rehearsing' or reinforcing etc. etc!

HOW DO YOU DO IT?

We discussed all kinds of sounds we might meet in our wood—wind, creaking trees, birds, water, weather etc. Then we made such sounds with our voices and bodies and went off to find natural and human objects. These were then used to make a variety of sounds and rhythms and worked up into performances in pairs and groups with varying levels of sound, dynamics, surprise, moodiness etc. Simple instruments were made or handed out from a collection provided and we moved into the following very basically:

• Sounds can have different pitches so we get scales, keys and modes, but all are based easily on 'Do Ray Me';

• Sounds can be louder or softer so we get dynamics;

• Call response and harmony;

• Rhythm and time, basic rhythms like walking 4/4 time (rells or marches): skipping 6/8 time (jigs or gallops) then more complex rhythms;

• Patterns;

• Solo or group.

WHAT TO DO FOR THE SHOW

Find sounds in or on yourself, or make an instrument, get the sounds and work with each other to build up a cacophony, a polyphony or a symphony but for nature's sake avoid monotony! Make it function for its purpose in the total sense and within a cultural frame.

THE APPROACH WAS FUNCTIONAL

Hey! Come on! Come with us! Let's go! Go with the flow! This is it! What's next? That's it! Let's do it again!

At each station of the show we hid in the trees and used the sounds and rhythms we'd developed to lead people in to the story, finish it off and move on to the next one varying the mood accordingly. It seemed to work and was good fun which welded the group together quickly and broke down any reserve.

Mike Wild, based at Sheffield Hallam University, is a South Yorkshire Folk Network musician and works with communities on environmental projects using various art forms.

HOW TO MAKE IT HAPPEN : CONSTRUCTING AN ARTS STRATEGY

Lesley Greene

Consultant

Putting together an arts strategy is simply planning properly. It indicates thoughtfulness and good planning. It is the key starting point for any project or policy, more things will go wrong if you do not put even a simple plan together, but to be hard nosed about it an increasing number of funding organisations now require a plan before they will even consider making a grant. It will make the arguments. I will ask the questions – is a sculpture trail appropriate for everywhere and everyone? Most notable the Lottery arts distributor encourages all applicants embarking on longer term or large projects to prepare feasibility studies before they will fund the main project, and the Lottery distributor makes funds available for these feasibility studies.

One of the first issues is to be clear about what level of response is appropriate in the sense that input into a larger-scale strategy might be more effective than a separate individual arts strategy. Input into Local Plans would be a case in point when a contribution to each chapter of a Local Plan could have more impact than a separate chapter on art.

Who will research and write your strategy?

Always take advice and never underestimate the range of skills required to implement arts strategies.

There are a number of consultants and agencies in the field and the names of these people can be obtained from the regional arts board, arts and crafts councils. Do consider asking an outside consultant in because drawing up a strategy requires some objectivity and they can come up with different ideas which may not be seen from within house. It may be important if the scheme is large to pull together a team of specialists who will help put the strategy together or have a steering committee of representative interests who will provide the specialist input the strategy requires. These people are important. They will ask crucial questions – why art at all? Is it appropriate? it may be creative (and sustainability) to say "no".

There are a number of simple heading which you can list as necessary for your strategy. These include the following :-

THE MISSION OR VISION

What is it that you really want to do, who will benefit from your idea and why your project is so important and unique. What is it about the arts that will benefit the community and what the role of the artist will be.

THE OBJECTIVES

Beyond the grand design of the vision you should specify particular objectives. These may include commissioning artists to work with local communities, creating good publicity for public art, setting up situations in which local artists may work with international artists, enhancing a local building, stimulating critical debate, publishing new material etc etc. In this list specify who will benefit and why.

THE PARTICIPANTS AND THE PROCESS

There can be any number of people or organisations who may be involved in the project. The process of involving them will begin with the development of the strategy. Consultation starts here by talking to everyone who might have a part to play or an influence to bear on the project. When developing the strategy for the Kowtowed Way I discussed the idea, albeit quite briefly with some, with every local authority on the Way, most voluntary bodies, tourist authorities, planners as well as an independent list of local artists and other agencies dealing with trails of one kind or another. It may be a good idea to bring everyone together in process which we can see being developed with such success in, for example, the Agenda 21 processes taking place today.

There are any number of ways in which the process of involving artists in environmental projects may develop. In Victorian buildings craftspeople were always involved in construction and design. At Grizedale commissioned artist in residence schemes have provided the backbone of the approach; in other projects such as the Portland Cliffton Sculpture schemes artists were invited to work together temporarily on summer projects -- rather like the European sculpture symposia approach -- in the Forest of Dean artists were commissioned to do site-specific artworks, Common Ground works from the community responding to their needs and then assisting that community to choose appropriate artists. National ideas can emerge from conferences and one thinks of the success of the use of willow now in artists environmental work which originated from the Willow Conference in Ness inspired and organised by Projects UK. Large urban areas,

for example cities such as Barcelona, will have other policies such a very long-term integration of artists, architects and landscape architects in all aspects of the planning and design of open spaces. Artists may be commissioned locally, nationally or internationally or there may be a mix. Use the strategy to look carefully at the context, what its impact may (the objectives again) and how your artists will affect these things.

All strategies need to research and recommend who should be involved, when and why, and in the context of the objectives the best way of involving them. Above all, be flexible.

TIMING

Look carefully at when the project needs to get off the ground, the amount of time needed for foundation, planning permissions, consultation etc and build in phasing, and contingencies. Many bodies planning arts and environmental projects are far too optimistic about time-tables – local authorities with cash to spend at the end of a financial year are particular culprits – environmental projects take time and the quality will not be there unless you do take time – hence the need for a strategy.

BUDGETS

Be professional. The strategy will research and recommend an ideal budget based on the anticipated costs involved in the project. Few projects have a ready made budget and if not the strategy should identify from where the costs can be raised. It may suggest that a percent for art be levied on the capital aspects of the project. The strategist's research may unearth a local trust fund with a particular interest in the project area, or a number of funds which, in a package (the commonest way of dealing with projects today) made up from the regional arts board, business sponsorship, a local charity, and public subscription will bring about the desired amount.

SELECTION PROCESSES

Artists can be chosen by three main methods; direct commission, limited or open competition. The strategy will recommend the most appropriate way for your project.

SITES

Ask who will identify sites – will it be the client, the community or the artist – or is it a mutually developing process? Identify sites for artworks in the context of other practical constraints too.

CONTRACTS

All good strategies today will recommend the formal setting up of contracts between the client(s) and the artist(s) for these define the legal parameters, ownership, maintenance and management and other crucial aspects of commissioning. Copyright should be addressed in the contract.

MAINTENANCE AND MANAGEMENT

The strategy will address the issue of management -- both the management of the commissioning/developmental process and also the amazement of the maintenance of the environment after the work has been completed.

PUBLICITY AND MARKETING

Often forgotten, but covering a range of issues from effective signposting, to posters, catalogues, media relations, the opening events, exhibitions, documentation etc.

ACCESSIBILITY

Last but not least is the project accessible? Access to the countryside for recreation is taken for granted when large numbers of the population own cars. But a drive to the countryside or a walk from the car forms a central part of our unsustainable life-style. If government targets for CO2 emissions are to be met the car culture has to be challenged. Managers who provide for car users by developing sculpture trails away from train or bike routes are actively perpetuating the car culture. It is usually assumed that people choose to use their cars but in most instances a choice has been made for them. Artists and arts administrators MUST take responsibility with regard to these issues when planning arts trails or countryside arts projects. Look to Sustrans as an exceptional example of working with the arts in a environmental positive way.

If it is being funded publicly or through the Lottery accessibility and equal opportunities are top of the agenda, and a strategy will identify the weaknesses of the project in these terms, suggest solutions and incorporate the cost of those solutions in the budget.

SLIDE/ILLUSTRATIONS

Two examples which reveal how important a strategy is:

The first -- an acute Mental Illness Hospital in Charlton Lane, Cheltenham, where clients groups staff (consultants and nurses) artists, architect and landscape architects worked together in a Planning for Real process to develop the designs of the hospital. This resulted in a number of integrated artworks – including a huge stained and etched glass window at the entrance area and an internal courtyard designed and planted by the clients plus £% for art. The result -- a satisfying project for all concerned and a project which goes on in terms of the contributions of arts to the interior.

The second – an environmental project the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trail. Organically developed and in many respects excellent because of the quality of the artworks commissioned, this project has found great problems with the maintenance of the trail having failed to acknowledge its popularity and overwhelming visitor numbers. Accordingly the artworks have been compromised, several severely eroded -- "loved to death" – and several ugly features accidently developed (large gravelled pathways) in reponse to the trail's popularity. It is clear in hindsight at that a strategy which could have planned for the relationship between visitor, artwork and landscape should have been there from the start to consider how these aspects could have been dealt with. Both projects are excellent in their own way, both projects are very different, but one goes form strength to strength because of a researched, planned and agreed consultative strategy worked on before the project ever started, the other has stumbled somewhat because of problems which occurred due to the lack of a strategy.

Lesley Greene is a public arts consultant, formerly with the Scottish Arts Council, and the founder of the Public Arts Development Trust.

Programme

day 1

Coffee and registration from 0930

1030	Welcome and introduction		**Richard Broadhurst**
1040	So what use is art anyway?		**John Fox**
1110	Case studies:	1110 Children's play	**Andy Frost**
		1130 Story telling	**Malcolm Green**
		1150 Multi-cultural work	**Stephanie Bunn**
		1210 Performance	**David Farmer**
	followed by discussion and questions		
1300	Lunch		
1400	Workshops:	Wood and Wonders	**Andy Frost**
		Nature of Stories	**Malcolm Green**
		Art, Play and Learning	**Charles Carter**
		Willow Wear	**Stephanie Bunn**
		Sounds Like Nature	**Mike Wild**
1800	BBQ		
1930 onwards	"Jiggery Pokery, Piggery Jokery"		

day 2

0915	How much more can be achieved by using an artistic approach?	**Alasdair Urquhart**
0955	Case study: integrating art with countryside management	**Dick Capel**
1030	Coffee	
1100	How to make it happen: funding and management	**Jan Dungey**
1130	Case study: Grizedale project management	**Brian Mahony/Bill Grant**
1215	Visit Grizedale, with packed lunch	
1415	Return and prepare graffiti poster of Grizedale experience	
1445	How to make it happen back in the office: preparing a strategy	**Lesley Greene**
1525	Discussion	
1545	Chairman's closing remarks; tea and exhibition	

Janet Anderson
Landscape Architect
Middlesbrough Borough Council

Chloe Aspinwall
Adopt-a-Park Worker
Barnsley Metropolitan Borough Council

Fran Batin
Student
Sheffield Hallam University

Gregor Beedie
Student
Duncan of Jordanstone College

Ian Bilsborough
Sponsorship Manager
Countryside Commission

Stephen Boffy
Community Arts Development Worker
Kettering Borough Council

Richard Broadhurst
Senior Recreation Officer
Forestry Authority

Stephanie Bunn
Artworker

Paul Burke
Ranger
Forest Enterprise

Roger Butler
Senior Landscape Architect
British Waterways

Dick Capel
Countryside Officer
East Cumbria Management Project

Charles Carter
Environmental Artist

Alison Crabbe
Landscape Architect
Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council

Gwenda Diack
Senior Ranger
Stirling District Council

David Downie
Battleby Centre Manager
Scottish Natural Heritage

Jan Dungey
Arts Development Officer
Yarmouth Borough Council

Elspeth English
Countryside Ranger
Greenfield Valley Heritage Park

Catherine Etchell
Network Manager
Countryside Recreation Network

Joan Fairhurst
Local Agenda 21 Project Officer
Cheshire County Council

David Farmer
Artistic Director
Tiebreak Touring Theatre

Simon Fenoulhet
Deputy Director
Cywaith Cymru/Artworks Wales

John Fox
Artistic Director
Welfare State International

Andy Frost
Sculptor

Callum Gordon
Sculpture Student
Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art

Juliet Grace
BT Countryside for All Project Officer
Fieldfare Trust

Bill Grant
The Grizedale Society

Malcolm Green
Country Park Manager
Rising Sun Countryside Centre

Lesley Greene
Public Arts Consultant
Old Police House

Martin Harris
Head Countryside Warden
Horsham District Council

Diana Hatton
Arts Officer
Northavon District Council

Sarah Hausaman
Great North Forest Link
Groundwork, South Tyneside

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Anglia Polytechnic University

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Peak National Park

Phillipa Hodgson
Co-Chair
Community Environmental Education Charity

Jan Hogarth
Research Student
University of Sunderland

Rose Horspool
Lecturer Art & Design
Bishop Burton College

Yvonne Hosker
Trainer
Training and Advice Service

Penny Knock
Head Ranger (Recreation)
Forest Enterprise

John Lincoln
Publicity Manager
English Nature

Fiona MacKenzie
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Brian Mahony
Forest District Manager
Forest Enterprise

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Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art

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Nicholas Meech Env. Art & Design

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