



Caravanserai is an arts residency project initiated by Mac & myself at Treloan Coastal Holidays, a caravan and camping site on the Roseland peninsula. In partnership with the campsite owners, Pete & Debs Walker we host activities that engage with, and celebrate the local environment and culture.

Linked to *caravanserai* is Annie's PhD research 'Interfaces of location and memory' – an exploration of place through context-led arts practice; and Mac's ongoing literary and (Un/Be) Spoken Word projects.

All of our work as artists, stems from being immersed in particular contexts. We have worked collaboratively and independently for over 2 decades on projects that span a wide spectrum of activities, situations and sites.

These include numerous individual and collective artist-led projects in virtual and physical spaces. For instance, before the ubiquity and ease of current social media platforms we were working across borders through programming net architectures for shared media and collaborative webcasting with artists and musicians in Germany and the Republic of Georgia – here nor there



Exchange and collaboration are central to our explorations and media used is specific to context – sometimes recognizably art and sometimes perhaps not.



Our experience of residency programmes in the UK, Germany and the Republic of Georgia has influenced our desire to create a shared space at Treloan – we see *caravanseraï* as a connective / responsive / doing / learning / making and social space. Added to all this our experience of public art commissions in large scale regeneration initiatives – where we have collaborated with numerous technologists, engineers, aquarium builders and so on to create interactive artworks driven by participation or sensor –led technologies – as well as large scale image productions for architectural glazing that are emergent of participatory processes.

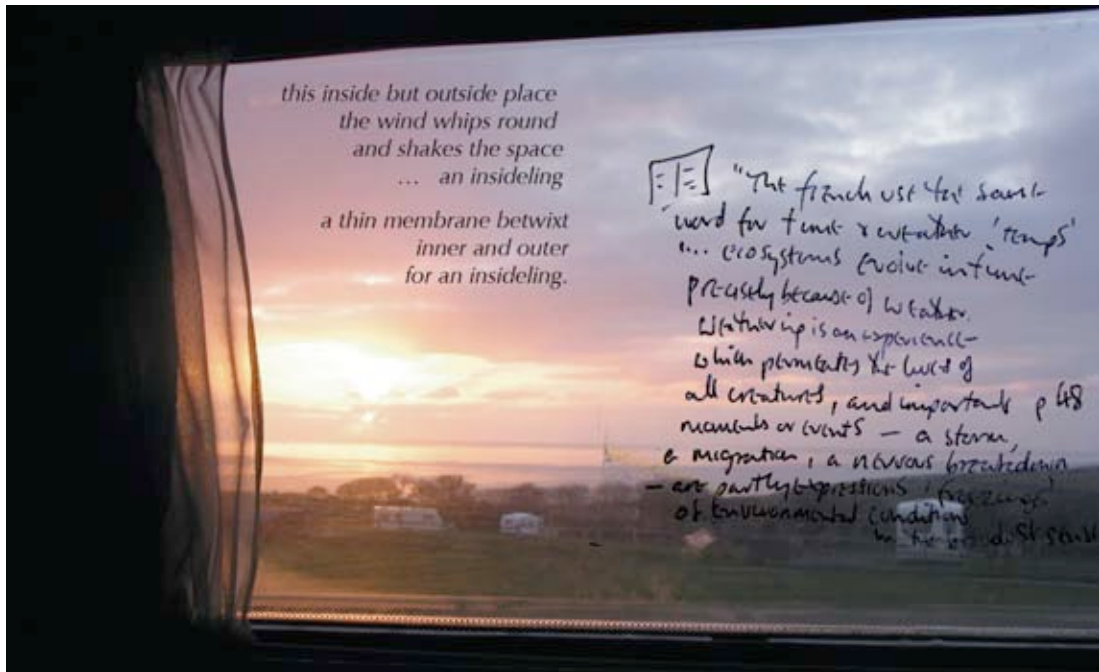




We first discovered Treloan in 2003, when in need of some space from the intensities of commission based work. The caravan, in which we stayed at different times of the year during the busy high season, or the quiet winter months, is a reflexive and elemental space where the habitual is shifted in proximity to other temporary residents and events of the field...



This is an inside but outside space – the walk across the field to the shower block or washing up area, come rain, wind or shine; the condensation on the windows; the wind rocked nights of no sleep; the dark silent deep sleep nights; the horizontal shaft of light that sits on the sea's horizon first thing in the morning; the rain hammering on the roof or the footsteps of a bird; the pan boiling on the stove; the phone ringing but breaking up – there's no signal



The geographer David Crouch refers to the liminality of the experience of caravanning, as being away from routine habits and having a different sense of being and doing – 'a closure of space for opening up the self'.

It was in this space that the seeds of a creative residency project sprouted in dialogue with fellow artists, writers and friends who saw creative potential in the immersive experience of caravan life in the ever-changing environs of the site.

Locally known as 'Arthur's field', Treloan is situated in the parish of St. Gerrans on the Roseland peninsula, a popular tourist destination designated as Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



The parish includes the villages of Gerrans and Portscatho, once separate villages, but now physically joined. These have a resident population of approximately 900 people. The local community hosts a large influx of visitors through second home ownership & holiday lets, and Treloan itself hosts over 2000 visitors throughout the high season.

Although there is a tendency to think of the caravan site as somewhere where people are in motion and transient, and the village as static and continuous, this easy distinction, which brings with it a politics of belonging and identity, is disrupted by the many layers of community in which people come and go, stay for different amounts of time either through desire or need, and are differently in motion through the site and the village - with different trajectories.

Stories and myths trace routes through the landscape,¹ historical roots both personal and political, tensions in ownership of the land and property abound.²

¹ These tracings of routes and roots – as mappings of memories and present day realities – are explored visually in the first half of *insites-a notebook* as well in the 'guidebook' *discovering what's on our doorstep*.

² For example see visual change of ownership; North Parade 2004 / 2009 in *insites-a notebook*.

One prominent tongue-in-cheek comment on the pervasive presence of 'blow ins' (tourists) is local resident Simon Gill's public intervention *Hotel Splendide*

THE Roseland is one of the wealthiest areas in Cornwall, if not in the country, with properties in St Mawes regularly vying with those in Rock and Sandbanks in Dorset for the title of most expensive seaside location in Britain.
Portscatho is not far behind, and you only have to see how few houses are lit in the winter evenings to understand that second homes nearly outnumber those of permanent residents. (West Briton 25.6.09)

fake signage by local resident
Portscatho 2007



not that he would consider this an 'intervention', Simon is not an artist – *Hotel Splendide* is reflective of his quick wit and incisive humour – it's a comment on the numbers of people he sometimes needs to accommodate in his sea front home.

Simon has been a sounding board for the project guidebook *discovering what's on our doorstep* - keen that facts are correct, and that 'the idiosyncracies of the place are not lost' he granted permission for inclusion of his father's poetry (or as he calls it 'doggerel'); Jerry Gill's prose and poetry is testament to the importance of situated knowledge – arising from his daily experiences and regular walks, he offers an invaluable account of environmental change at a very specific and experiential local level.

ONCE UPON A TIME

I know how beautiful was Gerrans Bay,
St Anthony to lovely Kybrick Cove
with fish in multitudes nigh ev'rywhere,
no death was there of life within that span.
From Peter's Splosh and Breakneck to the Grebe,
o'er Flat Rocks then to Killigerran Head,
Elwinick Cove, the Old Walls and the Zone.

*This epic poem tells of every fish that once swam
in the bay, how they were caught, the marks, what
they would weigh, and how they've become
scarce and small, such as the Bass...*

"Today they have gone, there's nought to
bring home, no Gannets diving, no boats
with four lines, no digging lugworms,
no cliff climb at night. Willows were
growing, fisherman made pots.

...
But slowly, surely all things were changing.
No willow gardens, pots made of plastic.

...
As fish grew scarcer men began to look,
for ways and means to use the gear they had,
and in a while, without a look ahead,
began to dredge the bottom of the Bay,
to harvest Scallops which were in demand.

...
But Nature couldn't keep pace with what was caught.
Catches fell but men persisted.
They trawled and trawled till scarce a life was left.
And so this Bay which once did teem with fish,
was left so barren, nothing seemed to stir.

excerpts from *Once Upon a Time* in 'Some Ramblings in
Rhyme and Reason of a Roseland Rambler' by Jerry Gill.
Published in his memory & available from local shops
& outlets (proceeds to Gerrans Churchyard Fund).



discovering what's on our doorstep. p.54

The reason I mention this, is that environmental projects are on the increase, and are all too often undertaken as short term initiatives – whereas immersive time spent can uncover the riches of knowledge that are already in place... this is our interest with

caravanserai – to seek out and respond to that which is already there - the extra-ordinary in the everyday comings and goings of a particular place.



Annie Lovejoy and Mac Dunlop *imagine* – *caravanserai* artwork. 2009

Caravanserai is a space of imagination for a multi-vocal response to place. To attend to the conditions that enable this, is to believe in the purpose of the project to manifest locally, as Adam Sutherland points out,

To make significant work in non art space you need to forget about the hierarchy of the art world and create a relevant and engaging process and product. So for artists and curators there is no point if you don't believe in it as an end in itself, that there is a purpose that the work will undertake in that context (Sutherland, 2010: unpaginated).

Sutherland invites people to work with the local context of Grizedale in the Lake District, also a tourist destination. He sees Grizedale Arts as sitting at the geographical centre of a 'tangled web [...] hoping perhaps naively to contribute something to the ongoing conversations that are babbling around it' (Grizedale Arts, 2009: 4).

Similarly *caravanserai* is an ongoing conversation with Treloan The partnership with Pete & Debs has evolved through being on site for long periods of time and getting involved with on site activities such as making an allotment in what's now called the project field.



To date, artists, writers, musicians, storytellers, geographers, foragers, academic researchers and post-graduate students, have been in residence triggering numerous participatory, inclusive, performative and experiential activities.

.. the residency space, is an ex Romany coachbuilt trailer situated in a quiet area of the site offering a focused and reflective working environment away from normative work practices and communication channels.



Portscatho based writer in residence Cat Holman describes the project van space as

“fantastic for a residency –with good areas to work in, and no complications or diversions like internet or phones, a chance to immerse myself in my surroundings and writing”.

Mobile phones rarely work, it's a regular occurrence to see people wandering across the field in search of a signal. Its great to be 'cut off ' said writer in residence Alyson Hallett. *The joy of Caravanserai she said is that It invites anyone and everyone to creatively connect with the ongoing, ever-changing nature of landscape..*



The nuances and textures of the various entanglements of people, objects, materials, and ethos are too dense to describe in detail so I'm just going to let the images roll







The interdependent relationship between local residents and visitors, between village and campsite and between the many local networks and societies provides fertile ground for creative exploration. Here the concept of ‘audience’ is replaced by that of intersubjective relationship, that resists the separation of a thing made or performed and a viewer. Instead, the *meshwork* of interrelations is perceived as an ongoing process of exchange and creative activity, as artist Richard Layzell notes,

I used to think obsessively about audience. Like ‘art’ I’m not sure that the concept of ‘audience’ works for me any longer. I think it’s about developing a relationship with people, place and ideas, like a kind of social architect, a performer who’s not performing, a planner with soul, or a friendly face. I hope that my practice has generated some small shifts in perception and opened up possibilities for other artists (Layzell in Shaw, 2005: 8).

Similarly *caravanserai* sees its curatorial role as opening up possibilities and care-taking (in the etymological sense – of *curare* – to take care of). Kirsten Lavers, an artist who

instigated *the taxi gallery*³ describes herself as a 'care-taker' not only with the focus of offering 'care' but also as a reminder to 'take care', in terms of being in a position of responsibility and control in relation to the work. With *caravanserai* this is inclusive of a place ethical approach that seeks to 'take care' of where we are, through creative activities that engage with the local environment and culture.

Sitting within within a tourist business and holiday destination, the project reaches a wide cross section of people; and, in terms of its operational structures is flexible encouraging responsive practices to evolve without the constraints of over-arching thematic curatorial structures, remote committees or inflexible bureaucracies.

Through participative activities and events (or functions) that celebrate the local, *caravanserai* opens up possibilities for change that are non-confrontational. This is slow art⁴ in progress, as is fitting to the complexities of a local context. In his reflections on creativity David Bohm refers to the original meaning of the word 'art' as being 'to fit', and says that

The fact that we are hardly aware of the syllable 'art' in words such as articulate or artifact is an indication of an implicit but deeply penetrating fragmentation in our thoughts between the aesthetic, emotional aspects of life and its practical functional aspects (Bohm, 2004: 99).

³ Taxi Gallery was a project initiated by artist, Kirsten Lavers, as an opportunity for artists to make work in a taxi. For this project Lavers adopted 'a curatorial or editorial role in relation to a framework initiated and steered by herself but activated by others. A framework that reaches for an extended (over time) relationship with both local and translocal audiences.' <http://www.taxigallery.org.uk> [accessed 12.02.2009]

⁴ Grayson Perry declared the need for a more thoughtful and hands on approach to art-making in 2005: 'As a producer of art I feel an increasing pressure to keep in step with our 24/7 culture-on-demand society, and as a consumer I am overwhelmed by a tyranny of choice. I hereby declare the launch of the Slow Art Movement (I have not hired a PR). Artists, I call on you to spend some quality time with a sketchbook before pointing the digital camera out of the car window [...] Maybe even take the rebellious and increasingly fashionable step of learning how to make something skillfully with your hands.' The Times September 7, 2005 http://entertainment.timesonline.co.uk/tol/arts_and_entertainment/article563715.ece

Artist Kathrin Böhm mentioned slow growth as being productive for rural arts development in a paper presented at the Rural Art Space Symposium in 2007; 'within a rural setting, the notion of a growing and slowly developing art space seems appropriate [as] rural Identity could be described as a relational and productive one, and slow rather than fast'. <http://www.ruralartspace.net/index.html@p=64.html> [accessed 29.10.2008]. Chrysalis Arts initiated a commissioning strand of 'slow art' in 2009 inspired by the Slow Food movement, that highlighted 'current changes affecting rural living and working, landscape, agriculture, and the impact of climate change on the environment.' <http://www.slowart.co.uk> [accessed 8.12.09]

Caravanserai events function as connective opportunities that invite people to consider different ways of doing things, for example, the annual *feast*, a local food banquet – entices people to shop locally, share food and culinary skills⁵.



The idea for *feast* was sparked by witnessing campers use of Tesco's 'shop & drop' on site. The sharing of food is a fundamental activity that allows space to create alternatives to habitual practices – *feast* in particular creates a momentum for change that can be articulated as a celebratory methodology for raising issues relevant to the local economy and environment⁶.



discovering what's on our doorstep. p.17

⁵ A camper who had purchased a copy of *discovering what's on our doorstep* said that she and her family had never eaten so well on holiday before – having found details of local produce suppliers via the listings on pages 16-17 (authors notes August 2011).

⁶ For *feast* 2010 special invitations were handed out to people on the campsite in envelopes that contained event details, a list of local suppliers and a couple of pages for submitting a recipe & list of ingredients (<http://fieldsite.wordpress.com/2010/08/26/feast-2010>). *Feast* is now an annual event, with local suppliers listed in the 'guidebook' - *discovering what's on our doorstep* p. 16-17.

Ivan Illich speaks of conviviality as an alternative to consumerist market production: 'Conviviality is opposed to productivity [...] productivity is conjugated with "to have"; conviviality with "to be"'

For the first feast in 2009 various barbecues were set up in the project with Greg Humphries making charcoal from local willow. As the sun set, guests were welcomed and invited to remember those no longer with us, and a fire sculpture created by Bristol based artist Hannah Cox, was set alight in memory of Laura Hardman.



Laura was the project manager for the arts funding programme also called FEAST - a picture of her remains in the project van accompanied by her thoughts on the transformational potential of art. In this sense, our annual *feast*, is also a memorial to Laura – a presence of absence. These events linger in the memories and conversations that occur in the proximities of campsite life. In the summer evenings cooking takes place outside, under the watchful eyes of all who pass by. The air is filled with the smell of barbecues, and amid the mass of supermarket burgers, well kitted canvas kitchens, canopied motor homes and fully floored and furnished caravan awnings, are a few fishers and foragers.



Foraging sessions are a popular *caravanserai* activity; they focus on the gathering, preparation and uses of wild plants providing opportunities for trans-generational sharing of knowledge and skills. Involving people from all walks of life, they are important meeting points for visitors and locals, as well as a way of getting to know the immediate environment.



Foraging is a slow process, the usual five minute stroll to the coastal path takes two hours when attending to the identification and uses of wild plants for food. This is situated knowledge and learning in action – an exploration of the local through the gathering, discussing, archiving, preparing and sharing of food.⁷

⁷ There are an increasing number of art projects focused on plant identification and food preparation, particularly in urban sites. For instance Food for Free by Kayle Brandon and Heath Bunting based in Bristol started in 2004. 'The work expresses itself in several forms – performative, textual, graphic, technological, horticultural, culinary – these forms are negotiated and set in motion by a map. The map locates the wild, feral and domestic, freely accessible edible plant organisms within the public arenas of Bristol city. http://duo.irational.org/food_for_free/press/food_for_free_press.pdf [accessed 7.3.2009].

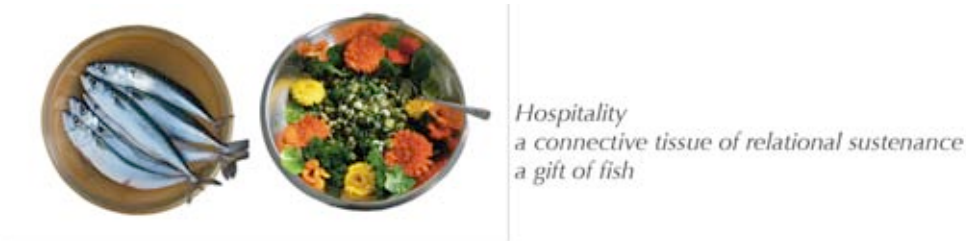


Similarly the garden is an ongoing collective learning process, and as mentioned previously, helps to generate the trust and dialogue necessary to facilitate *caravansera* residencies and creative activities at Treloan.



The garden has sustained hospitality throughout, its produce working its way onto the tables of our resident guests, or shared at fireside sessions and village events. It is within this space of exchange that practitioners are invited to work and local residents and visitors are inspired to participate.

Activist Chris Carlsson in his book *Nowtopia* discusses how the future is being reinvented by community garden projects and economies of exchange. Shared gardens are spaces where time opens up for conversations and debates in the seasonal doings of digging, planting, collecting seaweed, sowing, weeding, gathering, clearing, composting...



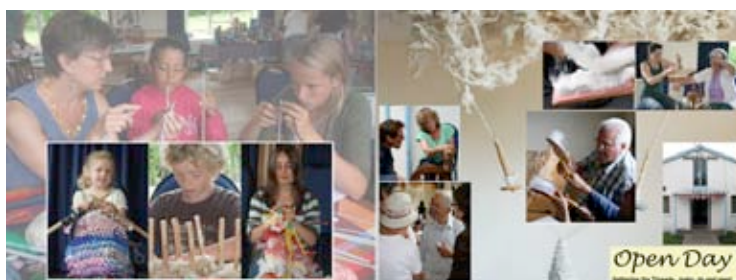
*it was a late fire as he sat telling us about the moon
and the behaviours of clouds - suddenly he was gone
to return with a box of eggs, 6 beautiful bluegreen eggs
for our friends. He didn't know who made the label -
it was a carton someone had given him.*

Discourse, and the trust necessary for discursive interaction and identification, grow out of a sustained relationship in time and space, the co-participation in specific material conditions of existence.
Kester, paper presented at Critical Sites 1998



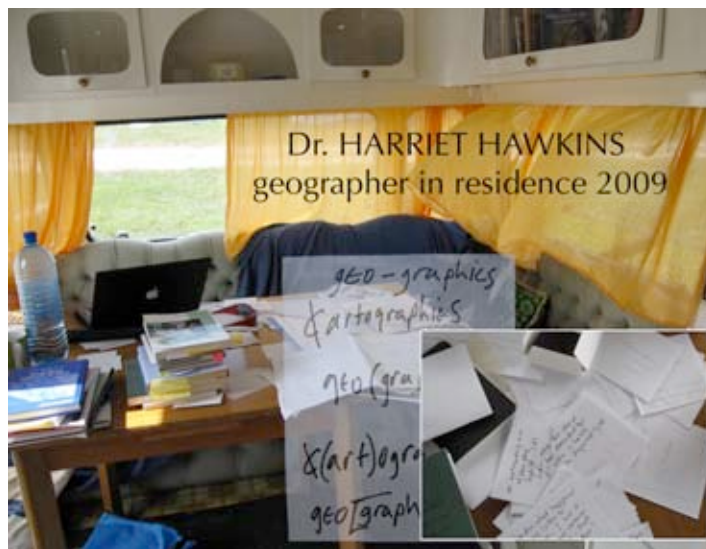
Coaxing food from land is a timeless activity. To tend a patch of land, putting hands in soil, planting, harvesting food and flowers is to join an enduring human tradition and to carry forward common skills about how to live on Earth that precedes everything we label 'the economy' (Carlsson, 2008: 81).

Other doings include the open day at the village hall 'Gathering the Threads' – a day of making and meeting. Knitters, spinners and carders demonstrated and shared their skills, and the collective completion of an artwork that revealed the processes of fleece to knitted product.



Amidst the recycled clothes making, shanty singers, piano playing, home-made cakes, local fair-trade and charity stalls, was a participatory exhibit: *Bringing it Home: Climate Change and Roseland's Landscapes* – a chance to consider the effects of climate change locally. This was a craft show with a difference, rather than the display and sale of finished products it was an open making session, a social gathering and a not-for-profit fundraiser, demonstrating local skills and shared practice, reflective of Adam Sutherland's comment that:

Rural culture needs to validate itself, make these craft re-enactments political, express some ideas, some values through creative activity, demonstrate ways of living creatively, consciously. This kind of activity is vital to rural communities and in many ways could and should be just as vital to urban communities as well (White, 2010; unpaginated).



For Hattie to be 'geographer-in-residence' was to have the opportunity to think amidst creative occupations of place, to critique the concept of 'residency' in the context of terms such as dwelling, duration, mobility, community and connectivity.

During her time at Treloan she & I collaborated on the development & production of a limited edition notebook for this years Royal Geographical Society conference.



'Insites' – a notebook attempts to make visible the socio-spatial processes of context-led practice, weaving together the meshwork of relations that arise from 'being' in a place. The book is an active object of enquiry, it is both aesthetic and functional - its blank pages invite further inscription in recognition of the evolving nature of the practice upon which it reflects. It suggests that the map does not tell us everything about a place. It juxtaposes the conventions of the map with experiential encounters and fragmented narratives – an assemblage of knowings about a place. With its gaps and slippages, the book is intentionally unfinished.

And so.. the 'art' of *caravanserai* is in the relationships formed, an ongoing conversation between visitors and visited. To be at Treloan for any length of time is to be aware of the 'peculiar reciprocity for longing at the heart of tourism' (Lippard, 1999: 13). Tourists may long for a connection with the land, beauty, local tradition and the exotica of being somewhere else. Locals, meanwhile, may long for progress, and an improved economy that enables them and their families to live and stay in the place of the visited. 'Tourism is one of the main drivers of Cornwall's economy', and the huge influx of summer visitors draws heavily on the county's resources – threatening the very environment that it promotes.



Situated within a tourist destination — *caravanserai* celebrates the distinctiveness of the locality whilst also drawing attention to the effects of tourism. The project offers an enhanced experience of, and relationship to, the locality through the various activities that have taken place.⁸ The recent production of a guidebook for campsite visitors — *discovering what's on our doorstep* — connects these activities to the processes and relationships of their emergence, mobilizing an active engagement with the locality. The guidebook format as a consumer-led representation of place is an opportunity for 'deep mapping' that values the *commonplace*, the cultural landscapes of the everyday affected by tourism - as Lippard suggested in her keynote lecture at the Falmouth Convention in 2010

If the beholding eye or the tourist gaze is inevitably socially constructed, who would be better at constructing it than artists? The dialectical relationship of the real past to the simulacra or cosmeticized versions that nourish conventional tourism should be grist for a cantankerous art.

⁸ The extent of these activities, processes and their effects are discussed in chapters five and six.



If you were present at any of the weekly 'fireside Sessions' held at Treloan over the summer, you might have heard Mac describe the origins of the word *caravanserai* before introducing the various guests of the evening.



Firesides are a weekly event that takes place through the high season (July – September) where people are invited to bring and share food, music, poetry and stories. Each session features experienced guest performers, singers or poets from Cornwall. These events generally attract 50 – 60 people and the atmosphere is one of conviviality that offers space for local residents and campsite visitors to perform, as well as guest writers and musicians. The relaxed atmosphere of these sessions has inspired people to write or perform, one local resident said that these sessions had introduced him to the power of poetry and fuelled his desire to write.

Every session is unique, people will linger beside the fire as the sun goes down whatever the weather, even in rain and wind, opening themselves to the encounters of the evening, this is *caravanserai* - as a meeting place.

Philosopher Freya Matthews suggests that if we were to substitute encounter for knowledge as our collective approach to reality, that is devoting as much energy and intelligence to advocating encounter as we do to advocating knowledge, we would 'be moving towards a society based on collective self-realisation through communication with the real rather than exploitation of it' (Matthews, 2003: 86).

A culture of encounter is a culture of poetry and song, poetry and song salvaged from their commodification as products of the entertainment and literary industries, and restored to the rightful place as participative arts of everyday life [...] To talk with the world in this way, to translate the mundane into the dream language of the poetic order, is truly to sing the world up,



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