

# Therapeutic Landscapes

RITUAL, CUSTOM and FOLKLORE

9th&10th March 2024

University of Worcester Art House, Castle Street, WRI 3ZQ

Instagram: folk.cultures.research

https://therapeuticlandscapes.wordpress.com/



# Therapeutic Landscapes 9th +10th March 2024 The Art House, University of Worcester

This event is jointly organised by the John Cussans, of the Arts and Health and Wellbeing research group and Desdemona McCannon of the Folk Cultures group at the University of Worcester. We invited artists, health practitioners, academics and historians who, both formally and informally, are investigating the intersections of ritual, folklore, magic and landscape and their implications for emotional health and wellbeing to present their work around (but not limited to) the following themes-

- Convivial participatory art practices
- Ritual and therapeutic practice
- Emotional distress and embodied practice
- Meditation and prayer
- Modern pilgrimage
- · Communal creative interventions in the landscape
- Mayhem and mischief and the carnivalesque
- Rave and festival culture
- · Right to Roam
- Unsafe safe spaces
- Modern Druidry and alchemical practices for mental health
- Mortality, ancestors and commemoration
- · Places of healing
- Caves, grottos, hidden places
- Stones and megaliths
- · The psychogeography of post- industrial landscapes
- The feminine sublime
- Vision quests, dream mysteries and trauma healing
- Critiques of wellness culture
- Art Historical precedents to the above

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Ree Han, Amber Sparrey, Jo Henderson, Rhiannon Green, Dan Roach, Martyna Sabadasz, Ruth Stacey, Robert Alan Davies, & our student volunteers.

# Keynote Speakers

#### Dr. Azadeh Fatehrad

Dr. Azadeh Fatehrad is a Senior Lecturer and International Research Lead at Kingston University, known for her interdisciplinary expertise in migrant homemaking and the politics of integration. Her research intertwines academic inquiry with artistic and curatorial practices, providing profound insights into societal integration challenges. Dr. Fatehrad's participatory research, conducted in collaboration with communities in the UK, Sweden, and Denmark, explores the nuanced interplays of landscape, folklore, and emotional wellbeing. She co-leads the impactful Nature-Based Integration project, which is funded by The British Academy and The Nuffield Foundation. She is an executive board member of the European Artistic Research Network. For more information, visit www.azadehfatehrad.com.

# Dr. Guy Hayward British Pilgrimage Trust

What is pilgrimage? What societal problems does pilgrimage solve? What are the benefits of pilgrimage? How can pilgrimage facilitate cross-cultural spiritual practices? How does a pilgrimage route benefit a local community? How does pilgrimage connect us with nature? How does the metaphor of life as a pilgrimage prepare us for death? What are the pilgrim place categories? What do these places do? What are the different types of pilgrim routes? What roles do history, myth and lore play? What themes can guided pilgrimages take? What are Sanctuary and 1-day Cathedral Routes? What is the British Pilgrimage Trust charity? What have we done so far? What do we hope to do? Who benefits? What is the future of pilgrimage? Some songs will be sung... https://britishpilgrimage.org/

Dr Guy Hayward, is the Director of the British Pilgrimage Trust, which he co-founded in 2014 to promote 'bring your own beliefs' pilgrimage in Britain. He has been interviewed about modern pilgrimage for Netflix, BBC1 and BBC2 TV's 'Pilgrimage' and Channel 4's 'Britain's Ancient Tracks', contributes to BBC Radio 4 and has written for the Guardian and Spectator. Guy completed a PhD at Cambridge on how singing forms community, founded choralevensong.org and is half of musical comedy double act Bounder & Cad.

# Lucy Wright

#### Tradition is good for you: towards an inclusive 'hedge' folklore for all

This presentation will provide some early reflections on my recent projects, 'Dusking' and 'Hedge Morris Dancing', which have sought to enact a more inclusive invitation to participate in seasonal folk customs, particularly for those who are currently marginalised or excluded from the mainstream spaces and narratives of English folklore. Believing that participation in empowering traditions of all kinds is key to living a good life, and drawing on more than ten years of research into the lesser-known and overlooked folklore, I have recently begun to use my learnings to invent new customs which centralise access and inclusion for all. 'Transmitted' online (in contrast to the face-to-face transmission presumed by the 'oral tradition') these new customs continue to emphasise the importance of the unique topography of the practitioner's personal landscapes, both real and imagined, while also enabling participation 'at a distance' from the established sites of cultural value, alongside infinite adaptations and customisations to make them most personally meaningful.

I have resurrected the word 'hedge' to describe my ongoing explorations into solitary and un-orthodox folk arts practice-'hedge' being a term historically used (rather derogatorily) to describe activities that were self-initiated, unofficial and unsanctioned-like the 'hedge' schools in 18th/19th century Ireland and the solitary rituals of 'hedge witchcraft', as described by Rae Beth. Cognisant of the gender gap in the work of the early folklore collectors as well as the barriers faced by many people who might wish to take part in established seasonal customs, my work explores what it is to encounter and participate in traditions remotely-e.g. geographically and temporally-and how collective, cultural meanings might be transformed into personal symbologies through acts of (re)clamation and appropriation.

While hedge morris dancing invites us all to dance for the joy of

While hedge morris dancing invites us all to dance for the joy of it, regardless of location or training, Dusking prompts us to honour the gifts of the darker months of the year, the rest, reflection and replenishment detailed in Katherine May's book, Wintering.

Lucy Wright is an artist based in Leeds, UK. Her multidisciplinary practice sits at the intersection of folklore and activism, often using as source material the large personal archive of photographs and research she has gathered over nearly a decade of documenting female and queer-led folk customs. Many of her projects reference and subvert traditional arts-both material and performed-to explore the contestations of gender and class in the archive, and recurrent themes in her works include female solitude, the relationships between the body and the landscape, and self-determined arts and community-making, outside of mainstream institutions and frameworks.

Following a stint as the lead singer in BBC Folk Award-nominated act, Pilgrims' Way, Wright received a Vice Chancellor's scholarship from Manchester School of Art for her PhD (2014) before becoming a Visiting Research Fellow in Folklore at University of Hertfordshire in 2019. She has undertaken residencies for Analogue Farm (2022) and Morning Boat, Jersey (2018/19) and has recently exhibited at serf, Leeds Art Gallery, Compton Verney and Cecil Sharp House. Commissions and awards include from Marchmont House (2023), A-N (2023), Daíwa Foundation (2023) and Meadow Arts (2021).

# Dr Sonia Overall

## Walking, Wassailing and Wellbeing: creative explorations of place and custom

This presentation will explore my research and practice responding to the connected folk customs of Hoodening and Wassailing. This work brings together psychogeography, performance and my ambulatory writing practice to produce new creative responses to traditions. Alongside creative outputs, I share this research with audiences through interactive performance walks. For this presentation, I will focus on the potential wellbeing benefits of these walks, which combine Hoodening performances, sited readings, Wassailing and song, tapping into the therapeutic benefits of communal walking, connection to place, intangible heritage and joyful noise-making.

Hoodening is an East Kent Christmas house calling custom. 19th century teams of Hoodeners, comprised of stable lads and farmhands, sang and performed with a Hooden Horse, a form of animal guising, in return for money, food and drink. Revival Hoodening teams now perform around East Kent, and the custom has become connected with the more widespread winter tradition of Wassailing. The Hooden Horse also appears at May Day celebrations, summer festivals and as a Morris 'beast'. While rooted in local custom, interest in Hoodening is broadening as part of the new 'folk activist' movement of artists and curators, including Ben Edge and Simon Costin.

Having become involved in folk theatre as a musician and performer, I now adapt and write Hoodening scripts for performance and explore the uncanny figure of the Hooden Horse through prose poetry, creative nonfiction and film. For the conference, I will present key activities and related wellbeing findings from the ACE/NHLF-funded project 'Celebrating the Kentish Hooden Horse' (2023), created in collaboration with fellow Hoodener and folk activist James Frost. This project commenced with a pilot event in Sandwich, East Kent, including a performance 'Walk and Wassail', in January 2023. Following highly positive feedback, this event will be repeated in January 2024, findings and documentary elements from which I will share in the presentation.

Dr Sonia Overall is a writer, psychogeographer and academic living in East Kent, UK. Her published work includes novels, poetry, short stories, academic articles and features, many of which explore place, the nonhuman, folklore and aspects of the weird. Sonia's writing often uses experimental and hybrid forms. She is a performer of folk theatre, a practice which extends to writing and adapting work for performance. Her books include the poetry chapbook The Art of Walking, walking-writing manual walk write (repeat), pilgrimage memoir Heavy Time and her latest novel, Eden. Sonia is a Reader in Creative Writing at Canterbury Christ Church University.

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## Nar Saud

#### Nepali Déuda Folklore: An Embodied Practice for Emotional Well-being

This paper investigates the therapeutic landscape of Nepali Déuda folklore in the specific situation of mid- and far- western Nepal, shedding light on its influence on emotional well-being of local communities. This study asserts that Déuda serves as a culturally embedded and embodied practice, offering a unique pathway for emotional expression and resilience in the Nepali heartland.

The central thesis of this paper posits that, within the distinctive sociocultural aspect of mid-and far-western Nepal, including migrants and diaspora from the regions, the embodied practice of Déuda plays a crucial role in addressing emotional challenges and fostering community cohesion. The argument unfolds through a multifaceted analysis of Déuda's performative elements, demonstrating how rhythmic movements, melodic tunes, and narrative components collectively create a sensorial experience that facilitates emotional release and psychological healing.

The theoretical basis of this study draws on the concept of 'embodied cognition', positing that the mind and body are interconnected and that abstract concepts can be understood through bodily experiences (Lakoff and Johnson, 1999). Applying this theoretical lens, the study explores how the embodied nature of Déuda functions as a space for emotional processing, providing a theoretical framework for understanding the symbiotic relationship between cultural practices and emotional well-being in the Nepali context.

Evidence supporting this argument is derived from participatory fieldwork thorough observations and interviews conducted in the regions, offering rich qualitative insights into the lived experiences of individuals engaging with Déuda as a therapeutic landscape. Through this interdisciplinary approach, this study contributes to our understanding of how culturally embedded practices can serve as powerful resources for emotional well-being, particularly in regions with distinct cultural contexts such as mid- and far-western Nepal.

Nar Bahadur Saud, a PhD student at the University for the Creative Arts (UCA) in the UK under the Vice Chancellor Studentship, was a Rotary Peace Fellow in Thailand in 2022; additionally serves as a co-investigator of a research project within the AHRC-funded Mobile Arts for Peace (MAP) initiative, in partnership with UCA and the University of Lincoln. With a decade in Nepal's peacebuilding sectors, he directly engaged with 20,000 individuals, authored over 100 successful development proposals, and conducted 10 project monitoring and manual development. Published in international journals, his research explores the intersection of transitional justice, reconciliation, and arts-based activities in community transformation. He supported to empower ex-combatants for sustained peace through arts in Nepal. Passionate about aiding underprivileged communities, he seeks collaborations with researchers and academicians, particularly focusing on Nepal and South Asia.

Isabella Johnston

## How to use foraging and folklore to build new collective learning paradigms

This presentation sits on the back of my research and work as a foraging teacher. I've been leading foraging walks for 7 years under the monicker Rights For Weeds. The first chapter of the presentation will introduce foraging walks, my teaching philosophy, and how folklore fits in. A foraging walk is an extraordinary teaching space. Far from the classrooms and goal-orientated learning objectives that our population, unanimously, was raised on, it presents an opportunity to unpack some of our perceptions about what a learning environment should look like.

Working with the elements means that traditional narrative structures/lesson plans can't work on a foraging walk. Instead, we discuss plant lore in fragments, depending on which plants we meet and in which order. The spaces in between are filled with the ideas and opinions of the students. I'd like to present this idea of a spreading, non-linear teaching/storytelling space, and give examples of how the stories I tell on a foraging walk are reflected in the "bottom-up" structure of the workshop.

I'll then discuss the implications of this teaching paradigm for mine and my students' wellbeing, presenting some of the conversations that we've had on foraging walks. On every foraging walk, there'll be an instance where a piece of folklore will open up a broader conversation about personal or community health. It could be around land rights/access, death, eco-anxiety, colonialism, to give just a few examples. This presentation won't serve to unpack any of these topics, but I think it'd be valuable to share a couple of examples, how we got to them and from which story.

The final part of my presentation will see me gathering information from students. I'll ask them how folk stories, and the topics they've brought up, have affected their relationship to the land, their community and themselves. I'll present this (in slides) as snippets of video/audio conversations, or text.

Isabella Johnston is a forager and runs a foraging project called Rights For Weeds. Using a mixture of foraging, folklore, bushcraft and the arts, Rights For Weeds aims to unite the plants and people that make up the urban ecosystem.

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#### Kate Gathercole

## Hedge Singing

A consideration of the singing of folk songs in community, and the potential this has to bring us into a place of deepening connection with ourselves and other, whether that be a community of friends, a choir, or solitary 'hedge singing' with the local landscape.

Traditional folk songs offer a sharing of experience that is filled with the ordinariness of human-being. The songs are at once contemporary and historic - their evolving stories and melodies making connections that are present in the now of universal themes, and that are given new meaning with each new singing. A community of voices are entangled into their history - voices that have shaped the songs over hundreds of years.

When we bring a community together in song we grow connection with each other. When we bring that community together to sing songs that resonate with the stories of our ancestors or with ancient patterns of relationship with the land, perhaps this helps to renew our availability to experience ourselves as part of our encompassing ecosystem.

Members of the community choir I work with have commented that singing traditional folk songs has enhanced their awareness of season and place: "Walking around with the songs in my head I felt really connected with the spring, and to others who must have felt the same way over the centuries..." "... I felt like I wanted to put flowers in my hair and go out dancing..."

It is understood that when we sing together in community our hearts synchronise - studies show compliances of heart rate variability between us, as well as prosocial effects including the development of trust.

Perhaps 'hedge singing' - consciously singing songs to the surrounding landscape - has the potential to grow similar feelings of trust into the constancy of the other-than-human world around us, engendering feelings of grounding and wellbeing.

Kate Gathercole is a folk singer, activist and community facilitator. Her work is focused on a variety of approaches to change-making, with particular emphasis on restoring relationship - with ourselves, each other and the world around us.

Experience in the arts, music, therapeutic interventions, permaculture and gestalt based / Balint facilitation all contribute to this work. Kate is also a community choir leader, and sings with folk duo Alula Down - working with song, field recording and sound collage.

Mother to three grown children, Kate shares a small-holding on a hillside with a double bass player, hens, dog, cat, bats, and some remarkable trees.

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# Sarah Scaife with Emma Capper

# Walking within and beyond spells of illness

This presentation reflects on Sarah's current practice-based research project which takesplace in South Devon from deep winter to late spring, 2024. It is in the form of a series ofgentle, walking-based enquiries with people who have lived experience of breast cancer treatment. Over six sessions around eight participants will explore ways to walk within and beyond spells of illness. The sessions are an artistic collaboration with Nature and Forest Therapy Guide, Emma Capper (Creative Journeys in Nature.) Each themed four-hour session follows a simple structure, creating a container which becomes a ritual. The enquiry will culminate in a procession ceremony co-created by the group, held just a week before Beltane.

Practice-based research is a rich means to enable and evidence redistributions of agency in narratives of illness. Sarah's PhD research seeks to explore 'medicines of uncertainty', asking how might polyvocal, practice-based performance methods develop new ways of thinking and speaking about spells of illness in a more-than-human world? The slow walks discussed here emerge from my her practice project, 'Fluxambol' (Scaife, 2021), where Sarah created a prototype medicine, manufactured by intentional local walking and dispensed in the form of podcasts and on community radio. Sound recording will be the primary method used to document participant reflections on this medicine. With consent these sound recordings become part of the project record (research data).

This phase of the research is an artistic- rather than clinical- trial to investigate the efficacy of this walking medicine in community. The series will include gentle but provocative prompts to create conversation and live experience fertilising radical re-imaginings of our future selves. Dialogue with participants will range from 'What brought you here?' to 'How might ritual space hold rich and honest dialogue about tender matters?' In March 2024, wewill be halfway through the series with interesting new questions arising.

Scaife, S. (2021) Fluxambol: Prototyping a Medicine of Uncertainty., The Polyphony. Conversations across the Medical Humanities. Available at:

https://thepolyphony.org/2021/10/29/fluxambol-prototyping-a-medicine-of-uncertainty/

Sarah Scaife (she/her) is an artist and practice-based PhD candidate in Performance Practice. Activated by her own lived experience of breast cancer treatment, her research explores medicines of uncertainty. Sarah is a PGR at the University of Exeter (Department of Communications, Drama, and Film), where she is an active participant in the interdisciplinary Centre for Magic and Esotericism research community. Her enquiry is co-supervised at the University of Bristol (Department of English).

Emma Capper is a Nature and Forest Therapy Guide. This research collaboration is supported by an AHRC South, West and & Wales Doctoral Training Partnership award. https://cargo-collective.com/ragged-robin https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4913-4478 https://creativejourneys.org.uk/ (Emma Capper)

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# Becky Dodman Wainwright

#### Premonition of this Place

During a residency at Southcombe Barn Gallery, located in the folkloric-rich Dartmoor region, Dodman Wainwright delves into themes of ecology, place, spirit, and premonition. The gallery, situated in Widecombe-in-the Moor, undergoes dramatic seasonal transformations, from damp winters to lively summers. With a history steeped in mystique and a palpable sense of presence, Southcombe Barn

exudes a social, living energy. Frequent visits, facilitated by gallery owners, allowDodman Wainwright to absorb the changing seasons and diverse events, providing fertile ground for her creative process. Her approach, characterised by a focus on tapestry weaving, embraces an ethos of 'anti-consumption,' prioritising a deliberate, meditative creation process

over rapid production. Informed by a belief in the vitality of

Earth and the spirit it embodies, Dodman

Wainwright's work shies away from rigid facts, seeking instead to uncover the magic in the interstitial spaces. Play emerges as a vital conduit for creativity, rekindling the childlike wonder within each individual. Her participatory art-making processes, rooted in tea leaf readings and otherdivination techniques, serve as a means of understanding human-nonhuman relationships and the environment. Dodman Wainwright's upbringing imbued her with a belief in a soul or spirit, transcending religious confines and manifesting through enthusiasm and energy. The residency's explorations yield a series of artistic endeavours, including automatic writing, tea leaf readings, and tapestry weaving. These activities serve as conduits for connecting with the Earth's wild spirits and visualizing the internal landscapes of Southcombe Barn's inhabitants. Dodman Wainwright's tapestry weaving piece, "Hopeful Child," serves as a testament to the meditative and deliberate nature of her artistic practice. Informed by her belief in the vibrancy of Earth, her work champions pro-environmental practices and celebrates the magic beneath the surface. The resulting creations, manifested through a variety of mediums including digital photography and collaged paper works, are imbued with a sense of the ethereal, communicating a blend of past, future, and the enigmatic essence of specific places. These pieces, encapsulating dreams and visions, stand as a testament to DodmanWainwright's internal purpose of existence.

Becky Dodman Wainwright, a dynamic multi-disciplinary textile designer and artist, infuses her work with a vibrant style cultivated over a decade in the textile industry and as a lecturer at Arts University Plymouth. Hailing from Devon and drawing inspiration from her Chinese and Colombian heritage, Becky delves into traditional crafts to craft unique textile collections. Based in the South West of England, her

practice, Tasseography Textiles project, playfully challenges the banality of tea rituals. Following in the footsteps of her British great grandmother, she employs tea leaf readings to explore spirit, shape, and colour, fostering connections and creating participatory design approaches for textile art that delve into internal and physical landscapes and the concept of 'otherness' in an evolving future.

# Emily Wilkinson

## Kinship & Crows: An A/r/tographic Journey into the Mythology of Dinas Brân

The field of a/r/tography has seen growing international popularity, originally defined by Canadian researcher Rita L. Irwin in 2004. A/r/tography combines the roles of artist, researcher and teacher alongside other modalities such as writing and walking. The value of art based research has been widely demonstrated by scholars such as Helen Kara, Shaun McNiff and Patricia Leavy, yet accessible approaches for integrating the role of researcher into creative practice are still not commonplace. There is also little knowledge about a/r/tography in the UK. This practice-based paper addresses these gaps and explains a/r/tography with special attention to a creative derivé taken by a group of creative practitioners to Dinas Brân, a heritage site in Llangollen, Wales. These historic castle ruins are a backdrop to several myths and legends, which we explore as a/r/tographers. From documentation of our collective journey, I reveal how this approach enabled us to work with the landscape on a multitude of levels whilst adding playful and practical research elements to creative practice. This paper concludes that creatives can benefit enormously from taking an a/r/tographic approach in terms of meaningful shared experiences as ritual, depth of environmental understanding and subsequent valuable contributions to communities.

Emily Wilkinson is an artist, writer, researcher and holistic creative practitioner based in North Wales. She lives, works and connects within a a multi-sensory world, blending creative writing, visual art, movement, digital media and healing arts. Emily is currently a PhD student researching landscape, ecofeminism and creative arts with Aberystwyth and Exeter Universities (funded by SWW-DTP). She is a qualified yoga teacher, lowland walking leader and life coach. Lived experience as a neurodivergent creative informs her practice.

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## Katie Forrester

#### Illustrating Human Relationships to Nature through Reinterpreting Folktales of the River Severn

My current work explores visual storytelling as a method of documenting and reinterpreting the folklore of landscapes - in particular the River Severn - to explore human connections to nature, and how stories of place effects our wellbeing and sense of belonging. This research brings together ecofeminism and ecocriticism with folklorist theory and image-making methodologies that foreground visual narrative as a method of reinterpreting folktales. In this way, the research navigates interdisciplinary ways of comprehending the natural world and applies these findings to the construction of illustrations.

The folklore of the River Severn is a mesh of Indo-European, Saxon, Norse, Celtic and Roman myth among others. Roman myth is evident in the form of the goddess Sabrina, which the river is named after, and reflected in the Celtic myth of Ceridwen, the Celtic goddess of rebirth. The stories of the Severn are example of how folklore brings us to a place, shows us others have been there before and in doing so creates a legacy of diversity and belonging that in the transient world of online living, recognises a consistency in our geographies and history. Through actively 'noticing' the landscape through the lens of folklore, my work explores how I can reinterpret the folklore of the Severn through drawing and printmaking in the contemporary context of climate change. I share the folklore knowledge of the Severn through illustrations to recognise what natural landscapes mean to us through the characters that inhabit its folkloric world.

My illustration work draws on themes of narrative theory, nature, folk- and fairy-tale. The starting point for this research was through my doctoral study at the University of Edinburgh and as an artist in residence for the Scottish Early Literature for Children Initiative (SELCIE). My practice is also informed by working as a workshop facilitator, where I learned about the value of the creative process in engaging and fostering community. To build on this, I'm currently working with The Folk of Gloucester to create installations to explore and promote their storytelling library in the local area.

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Aloysius' work maps lived experiences of inequality and marginalisation and making as a form of overcoming. Working with discarded objects and materials found in London streets, she builds her ongoing sculptural series 'New Model Army', creating sculptures that critically address art historical notions of figuration, including by temporarily returning them to the urban landscape and documenting this moment through photography and film. This approach generates working diagrams, collages, architectural and other photographs and different kinds of written documents which Aloysius exhibits and publishes as single works or in multi-layered combinations known as 'Fieldworks'.

She was awarded a PhD Art (2018) and a distinction for her MFA Fine Art (2003) at Goldsmiths College, and a first-class BA hons Fine Art at Manchester Metropolitan University. Recent activities include with John Moores Painting Prize 2023, Walker Art Gallery (2023), Fruitmarket, Edinburgh (2023), The Foundling Museum (2022), SFK International, China (2021), Tate Modern (2020), Credit-Suisse London (2019), Glasgow University with Girlhood Gang (2019), APT London (2018), MAAT Lisbon (2017).

# Linda Aloysius

#### Healing Figures: New Model Army as New Model Healers (2020-2023)

The paper draws from my current sculpt-photographic project: Healing Figures: New Model Army as New Model Healers (2020-ongoing) which builds upon my approach of 'morphological activism' (1). The paper generally introduces my New Model Army series (2011-ongoing) (2), detailing how, in response to increased experiences of marginalisation and isolation as a working-class single mother, studying for an MFA and then a PhD at Goldsmiths College, I began building figurative sculptures using objects and materials found in the urban landscape and momentarily returning these sculptures to carefully selected hidden and / or overlooked urban spaces to photograph them. Since that time, the works and accounts of this process have appeared in various art institutional spaces (3), offering art institutional critique relating to intersectional inequalities.

This paper asserts that the above activity inclines to suggest an inclusion and belonging that I don't experience and find illusory and, as such, painful, requiring me to search for 'healing' spaces. Hence, In the current project 'Healing Figures: New Model Army as New Model Healers (2020-ongoing), I find and photograph my sculptures in urban spaces that suggest provisional and inadequate shelter, for my sculptures whilst they carry out their duty of activism and which, in combination, newly situate my sculptures as mystic healers / mystic 'Healing Figures' with the (self-appointed) power to self-heal and to heal other beings - humans and other entities. Drawing from my current research into eco-feminism and plant folklore (5) relating to overlooked urban nature, I relate how, via my sculptures and sculpt-photographs, I generate a form of creative geography which aims to: -Overcome past trauma, including relating to my experiences of 'the art world'

-Heal (from the) the urban, patriarchal landscape -Offer a space of healing and recovery to other working-class women, including and especially from their Invisible Labour,

which I here discuss as a form of embodied landscape (4)

(t) See: Aloysius, L. 'New Model Army: Behind Tate Modern: Morphological Activism and Working-Class Single Mothers'. In: Deepwell, K. (ed.). 'Feminist Activisms and Artivisms', Netherlands: Valiz, 166-179.

(2) The army is a working one, aiming to combat the historical inequalities experienced by women. At the same time, there is a sense in which the army intertwines ideas of embodied marginwomen. At the same time, there is a sense in which the army intertwines ideas of embodied marginalisation running through woman's body and land and the army can increasingly be understood as eco-feminist warriors; the army responds to temporary and provisional spaces and sites that, despite their tough appearance, are vulnerable to or actively fend off capitalist inroads. I work in several stages or phases to form sculptures and sculptural-photographic documents. I gather discarded materials and objects from commercial and domestic neighbourhoods within London. This gathering process can be read as a form of anthropological or even forensic survey, through which a material analysis is drawn. I then spend time working with these materials to form sculptural, so-called 'figurative' works. These works become part of my ongoing sculptural series New Model Army. I sometimes display my sculptures in the more traditional sense. I photograph the sculptures in outside spaces; the photographs document / evidence / testify to / momentarily realise a space of representation that currently does not exist for women's hidden labour. The intention is that the photographs are then be compiled to make a document (publication) for distribution to appropriate venues and individuals, including bookshops, galleries, members of parliament and appropriate venues and individuals, including bookshops, galleries, members of parliament and public figures.

public figures.
(3) For example, in recent group exhibitions in 'Poor Things', Fruitmarket, Edinburgh (2023), John Moores' Painting Prize (2023).
(4) My practice brings visibility to the invisible labour carried out by women, which is currently (and has been historically) under-represented in the art world. The term invisible labour refers generally to women's hidden and / or under-valued emotional, psychological and physical labour and the effects of this on their embodied subjectivities, including refusing their own gazes and, instead, being forced to comply with a patriarchal capitalist gaze. Much of the labour that women do is inside and invisible in both a literal and less obvious sense - women work within the home and 'behind closed doors', and they work internally in the sense of working emotionally and psychologically to provide support and care. Additionally, they work to be at the burden of and psychologically to provide support and care. Additionally, they work to bear the burden of being objectified whilst their own ways of looking are steadily croded. Through my practice, I generally ask: What new values would be activated if the effects of these hidden labour forms were made visible? For more on Invisible Labour see here: https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1057/

(5) I am currently studying on a RHS Level II Practical Horticulture at Capel Manor College, London's only Environmental College. Plant Folklore is part of my study.

## Melanie Rose

#### Eradicating Landscape

Landscape is 'over there', a hypothesis so deeply ingrained as to disconnect us from nature. Prior to 1620 the word landscape did not exist in the British vocabulary, but was introduced in association with the influx of European paintings as a means to describe a landform in the painting. It could be argued that these early formulaic paintings set a precedence with the wealthy by influencing how their estates might look with the right designer/engineer. Concepts relating to the Long View combined with the pastoral and an overly managed landscape are only today being addressed and rethought, but these philosophies run deep affecting not only how we garden but how our National Parks are managed.

This presentation will focus on two National Parks, The South Downs National Park and the New Forest National Park, including their formation and how through regional art collections we can deconstruct historic paintings to make sense of the climate crisis today, and also show how the power a painting has to create current conversation through comparison and analysis. It will draw on and compare letters by Gilbert White, paintings by the Smith Brothers made in the South Downs National Park and a hard won campaign, through painting, to save the New Forest from enclosure 1869 - 1877 (the same time as the foundation of Yosemite and Fontainebleau). The language of painting is universal, everyone has an opinion, which is where the argument can begin.

Dr Melanie Rose (Tugwell) explores place through painting, she is currently Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Leeds Arts and Humanities Institute (LAHRI) with a Leverhulme BA research grant, having successfully completed a practice-led PhD. Prior education includes, MA Central Saint Martins, BA (Hons) Trent Polytechnic and Foundation Winchester School of Art. Melanie is a subject specialist at West Dean College of Arts and Conservation and was the New Forest National Park Authorities Artist in Residence 2023 and is member of LAND2, a national network of artist/researchers with an interest in place-oriented art. She has exhibited widely and has work in both private and public collections.

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#### Ben Cox

## Creating a solution tangential to the problem: When does wellness culture get in the way of real healing?

Has a renewed interest in alternative cultural practices, the many topics of this conference, emerged in the space absented by Christianity in the wake of scientific, psychological and industrial revolutions? How have we adapted to the broad redefinition of the universe and our place within it in the last centuries? Dickens' participation in séance and use of the supernatural, W.B. Yeats' revival of Irish mythology and folklore. Are they reactions to reality no longer insured by divinity? Today we can trace these responses to entrenched belief structures that resist the scientific and academic process of peer scrutiny and evidence-based research. Why do many modern wellness practitioners reject rigour and accountability in favour of proclaimed spiritual authority?

Pandemic induced doubt and post-truth political approaches become dangerous as they niche away from the centre without intention of return. It is vulnerable people who pay the cost of ignorance. Notions of divine masculine and feminine permeate predatory patriarchal practices. Vision quests dismember without a culture to return to. Advertised safe spaces become deeply unsafe. I propose to critique the ways in which wellness culture, deliberately or otherwise, undermines pathways towards healing for vulnerable people in need of support. Identification with folklore, mythic imagination and ritual practice provide credibility for problematic disciplines and belief systems to obscure the path of wellness in abstract symbolism. This talk follows the message of fairy tale: Reminding us to light a candle in the dark to see the true face of our lover despite the pain and dismemberment this will cause. Combining image rich speech with linguistic strategies we will decouple cultural wisdom from muddy spiritual metaphysics to reveal roads for effective therapeutic work.

My work explores the edges of human knowing through attuned listening. It is lighting a candle in the dark to see the true face of things. It is Birch work - Pioneering new forests of the imagination. It is river speech bristling with so many voices keen to tell the stories of the world back to itself.

I am three journeys braided together. I explore the Philosophy of Myth - multivalent meaning making in story. As an Imaginal Artist I sail the oceans of common cultural imagination on a Bright Ship. Through the Court of Utterance I teach Bardic Education.

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# Emily O'Kelly

## Decolonising Death, Digitizing Lost Rites & Archival Paganism

"Giving voice to the madness that has beset him, the hero sings a lament to his lost child and wails with rage and heartbreak-an ancient death practice known as keening."

Irish keening emerged from the mythology of Cu Chuchlainn and evolved into a practice with a two-fold intention: to metabolize the quality of grief for the griever and as a frequency ladder, or energetic pathway, for the grieved to climb back "home" into the spiritual world. Keeners, ban chaointe, were considered alchemists, shamans or psychopomps – essential bridges between the material and non-material realms, and traditionally women.

The practice of keening in Ireland deteriorated in the 6th century when the Catholic Church seized power over burial rites. It was decided then that the soul could only resurrect itself under a Christian doctrine, through strictly priestly rituals. The Great Hunger of the 19th century also contributed to the loss of practice, as most ban chaointe or keeners were from poor lineages decimated by famine.

This pronged history demonstrates the complexities of colonization through a psycho-spiritual lens. The Irish are a deeply spiritual people, with beliefs that transcend monotheistic religion and patriarchal consolidation of rites. This proposal seeks to liberate a singular aspect of Irish ritual that is so instrumental to reclaiming said beliefs: grieving, and more specifically, the role of the feminine voice in this practice. In engaging with this kind of inquiry in a digital space, we can reinterpret and evolve these practices into relevance.

Emily is a death doula trainee, independent researcher and multi-disciplinary creative. her principal research interests include Irish death ritual, the portrayal of the 'otherworld' and the colonization of magic and occultism. Her creative endeavors include digital art, poetry and photography.

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# Janine Marriott

## "People of a Like-minded Philosophy": Secular and sacred pilgrimages to UK burial grounds.

Visiting graves due to the famous or infamous nature of the deceased is not a new phenomenon and early examples include medieval pilgrims visiting the grave of a saint, and later 18th and 19th century literature and art romanticising burial spots for public consumption, and even Victorian guidebooks to burial locations being produced for tourists.

In the 21st century burial sites some historic burial grounds deliver official opportunities to express grief including organised remembrance ceremonies, visits to war graves, and by marking the graves of royalty and national heroes. However, there are still unofficial and self-led secular pilgrimages to graves of both real and fictional individuals and animals and in these spaces visitors pay homage, process grief, or use the site as a way to get close to the person. These sites of pilgrimage can be people that were in the public eye from the 18th century to modern times such as politicians, authors, actors, TV personalities, social reformers, and even the graves of animals, or fictional characters. Evidence of these visits vary and can be physical tributes or virtual material which have specific meaning to the visitor or deceased and these activities are often self-led and not managed by those running the site.

Grave visiting as a leisure and ritual activity is often examined through the discipline of dark tourism (black spot/site of celebrity), but less so as an act of individual mourning, or grief management, or as a form of personal connection and remembrance in a sacred landscape. Through a set of case studies this act of pilgrimage will be examined and the paper will review the role of a burial ground as therapeutic landscape for helping to manage personal grief and mourning, or to feel and find community and connection

Janine Marriott is the Public Engagement Manager at Arnos Vale Cemetery in Bristol, UK. Her role involves encouraging visitors into the cemetery and providing opportunities to engage with the place, the stories held there, and the historic landscape. She began her career in teaching, moved on to museum education and has worked in a range of museums and heritage sites. Janine is now undertaking a part-time Doctorate in Heritage at the University of Hertfordshire, exploring public engagement in historic UK

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# S. K. Marley

# Our Transcapes: a pilgrimage of queer prehistory

Discovered in East Yorkshire is a set of 3,000-year-old wooden figurines depicting ambiguously sexed bodies. Multiple such figurines and human burials from prehistoric Britain and Europe suggest correlations between 'gender nonconformism', proximity to 'nature' and spiritual elevation, while blurring our current-day binary lenses of 'natural'/'unnatural', 'man'/'woman', 'spiritual'/'ecological' and 'human'/'nonhuman' beings.

In contrast, sociopolitical narratives today purport that gender nonconformity is new and 'unnatural'. Consequently, young transgender people in the UK experience poorer mental health than their cisgender peers. While the field of ecotherapy demonstrates the mental health benefits of being outdoors, trans people reportedly feel less safe in communal spaces. I want to ask: if young trans people in Britain encounter sites of queer prehistory, can they feel a greater sense of belonging and validity in our 'natural' and social landscapes?

Our Transcapes is a social impact research project created with Dr Ina Linge (University of Exeter) that explores this question. Young trans participants will be invited on guided pilgrimages to sites of queer prehistory and to attend creative workshops. They will then complete a qualitative survey to help us understand whether experiencing these landscapes can be healing. By combining psychogeography, queer ecology, ecotherapy and queer archaeology with pilgrimage and creative practice, this project takes an innovative approach to addressing young trans people's mental health.

In queering the field of archaeology, we attempt to avoid interpreting past contexts and beings through our present-day 'queer'/'heteronormative' lens. However, adopting this binary can be socially and politically beneficial today, as it allows us to offer alternative narratives about trans people by 'proving' their belonging and 'naturalness' through a queer prehistory.

S. K. Marley is an independent trans non-binary writer and researcher working in communications in Sheffield, South Yorkshire. They have just completed their first teen novel, Albion Awakes - a queer-ecological and supernatural coming-of-age story - which is now out for submission.

Their past research looks at how the use of place names in classical Japanese poetry may have helped construct Japanese ideas of Self and state, and the impact this has had on indigenous communities. Now, primarily through bog-based gallavants, S. K. explores how folklore, place and history in Britain can influence experiences of being, particularly for LGBTQ+ people.

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# Maija Liepins

#### The Art of Listening In The Dark

I am an Australian born artist of Latvian heritage with forests in my ancestery. I'm interested in finding healthy, creative ways to live and work. I have over 101 documented Vision Quests which I undertook over four years to embark on a transformative personal journey – to enter the Dream Forest and return with a gift for my culture of origin. My first experimental films were made during this time.

This year I was awarded a Developing Your Creative Practice from Arts Council England to develop my writing, performance and film. For Therapeutic Landscapes I am presenting The Art of Listening In the Dark an experimental performance lecture using film and spoken word to stir the imaginations of attendees.

I embody and enact my art practice, with a focus on entering the mysterious unknown, to extend hope and encouragement afforded to me through dialogues with nature; and with both internal and external landscapes. I'm interested in leaving spaces to listen and respond to the happening moment, leaving space for surprises. Where some Happenings of the 60s were like theatrical living paintings, with each brush stroke orchestrated by the artist, I prioritise dialogue.

Art as Dialogue is something that has been documented by Hammersley and others who wrote 'relationally and dialogically orientated practices can be understood to be a means of reconstituting art's relationships, both on an interpersonal level and at a discourse level.' All my work is about co-creation and cultivating conscious awareness of our relationship to ideas, and engaging the whole body - mental, emotional, physical and interpersonal. Moving images allows me to make these connections visual, whilst site-specific performativity as an 'art' form rather than a 'talk' highlights openings for collective meaning making. I seek to illuminate the emerging collective moment, creating opportunities for experiential insight.

A transdisciplinary artist based in Andover, Hampshire, Maija is currently in receipt of a Developing Your Creative Practice grant from Arts Council England to combine writing, performance and moving images. Recent participatory art projects include 'Wellbeing at Mottisfont' for the National Trust and 'Community Connections' for Hampshire Libraries. Maija's currently undertaking 420 hours of practitioner training with The School of Breathwork. Her experimental art practice emerged during CAS Associate Artist Residencies at Winchester School of Art Gallery 2015 and 2019, resulting in a publication Dissent: a Creative Practice. Maija received an a-space Turning Point bursary in 2022.

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# Sarah Bellisario

# The transformative potential of ritualising creativity

Arts involvement in ritual can be evidenced historically in many ways and across different cultures. Through ritualised dance, music making and costume, as well via the objects and artifacts made for and used as part of magical, shamanic or esoteric ritual practice that carries a healing or transformative intent. Humans across time have looked to ritual and creative practice as a means to reach through the liminal veil and connect with their spirit guides or ancestors, often for healing work or to bring something they wish for into being.

Artists such as Hilma Af Klint, Georgiana Houghton and Leonora Carrington have looked to explore beyond the everyday using the rituals of meditation, seance and mediumship to bring back messages from the other side which they translated into abstract and surrealist drawing and painting. And today artists such as Ben Jeans Houghton, Emily Hunt, Blue Firth and Sarah Bellisario explore our own esoteric practice, be that witchcraft, animism or theosophy through the act of ritual making in various forms and with a view to healing both ourselves and others.

In this talk I will explore how making art as a form of ritual, whether as a solitary practitioner, performance artist or via group making, has the potential to release trauma and can be healing for both for the maker and the future audience of the artwork. Using my own healing journey and esoteric ritual artworks as examples as well as exploring the work of other current UK artists and practitioner makers whose work engages with the liminal spirit worlds and reimagined traditional folklore practices.

Sarah Bellisario MA - I am an artist, lecturer and researcher with degrees in Contemporary Media Practice, Teaching and Children's Book Illustration. I am currently studying a Practice based Fine Art Doctorate at Hertfordshire University researching the materiality of magical healing objects. I am especially interested in the part magical objects, art making and ritual can play in transformation and healing through symbolic engagement.

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# Jacqui Edwards

#### Maiden, Mother, Crone: Exploring the Witch as an Embodiment of Female Identity in Virtual Worlds.

Virtual worlds are a place we increasingly inhabit, as somewhere to explore, wonder, challenge, and play. One may often encounter the Witch in such worlds, from The Forgotten Realms of Baldur's Gate, to the unnamed Continent of The Witcher and the World of Chaos, of Bayonetta. Contemporary discourse around the witch presents both positive and negative connotations of this identity. The derisive and time-trodden image of evil as a child-eating, monstrous hag, and the sexually voracious seductress of unwitting male victims; Versus the witch as a powerful identity of female independence, non-conformity, and sisterhood. In short, the misogynistic images that have prevailed since the publishing of the Malleus Maleficarum fuelled the 15 century witch hunts, and the feminist lens that has 'reclaimed the crone' (Stevens et al, 2020).

Pagans, Wiccans and modern witches all celebrate the Triple Goddess of Maiden, Mother, Crone, as linked to the phases of the moon and life cycle of woman. This maps to our virtual witches and their expression within a patriarchal society and industry, from sexy witch to hideous hag, with examples such as the 'good witches' Yennefer and Triss, versus the 'bad' Crones of Crookback Bog of Witcher 3: The Wild Hunt, all occupying the same game world. Beyond character fuelled RPGs, perhaps there is a more wholesome recognition of the positivity of the witch. Witchhood brings forth a deep connection between practitioner and nature, following the 'wheel of the year' through ritual. Games such as Alientrap's Wytchwood, explore this connection with the natural world, where the game mechanics involve collecting ingredients, brewing potions, and dishing out judgement on the characters that inhabit a land of fables and fairytales. This paper seeks to examine the witch in videogames, and how these archetypes and tropes may impact positively and negatively on the wellbeing of women that play, make and study games.

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Jacqui Edwards is a Senior Lecturer in Game Art at the University of Worcester. Her research interests centre around female representation in games, and she has been a Women in Games Ambassador for several years, promoting increased fairness and gender equality in the games industry. Prior to education, she worked as a character animator in many UK games companies from AAA to indie developers. Jacqui leads the BA Hons Game Art course, teaching rigging and motion capture, professional practice and negotiated projects for final year students.

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# Lally MacBeth & Matthew Shaw (Stone Club)

# Jojo Tulloh Land Makar

# Revisiting Ancient Sites in a Modern World

Stone Club was formed in 2021 as place for people to congregate, to muse, and most importantly to stomp to stones by artists Lally MacBeth and Matthew Shaw.

"Stone Club believes the journey is as important as the destination and encourages people to pause and think about place in new ways; connecting ancient sites through community and conversation. Through their conversations and explorations of landscape and ancient sites, Stone Club, aim to bring new perspectives to prehistory in a collaborative and inclusive way."

In this paper, we'd like to cover the founding of the club and explore how our approach and aims have formed a deeply engaged community that although has stone at its heart has opened up a much wider conversation around land access, inclusivity, mental health and forming positive solutions to climate anxiety and navigating the world in an increasingly unstable environment. In an age of division, we hope that through creating space for open dialogue and deep listening we can incite subtle and long-lasting change. We will give examples of how we've opened this space, and how through the club we work to build a landscape that everyone can inhabit.

Rule number two of Stone Club: Stone Club is for everyone.

Lally MacBeth is an artist, writer and researcher, and Matthew Shaw is an artist, writer and composer, and together they founded Stone Club in 2021. They have curated programmes for the British Museum, Folkestone Documentary Festival and the ICA, and shown work at Tate Britain. They run a regular night at The Social in London, and can mostly be found gazing at standing stones in West Penwith.

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For the last two years I have been intermittently walking (both legally and illegally) between ancient sites on Exmoor as I research the life of the writer and artist Hope Bourne (1918-2010). Hope lived a self-sufficient life in the middle of Exmoor at a place called Ferny Ball. She lived completely alone in a caravan without electricity for 25 years. Whilst Hope was a very practical, down to earth person she also had a deep connection to the ancient spirits of the moor which can be found by close reading of her books. She made her decision to live in this remote place partly because of financial reasons but also because of the comfort and solace she took from this wild landscape. I have made several pilgrimages to the abandoned farmstead where she had her caravan and also visited the stones, barrows and forts and water ways she loved to walk to, sketch and write about. I would love to read a little bit of this work in progress and talk about Hope and her relationship to Exmoor and its ancient sites and my own ongoing dialogue with Exmoor.

When I think back to the walks I have taken in search of Hope, they appear as a series of images, the owl flying out from the eaves of the burnt-out farm, the antler lying on the path like a gift, the red deer moving in a great herd across the hill. An otter leading me forward. A fox, golden in the late afternoon sun. If the painter, Leonora Carrington, thinks that each of us carries within us an inner bestiary. I choose to reverse this idea, whatever remains of her spirit remains here still, is in all of these creatures.

Jojo Tulloh is an editor, author and pamphleteer. Her first book East End Paradise, was published in 2009, and her second, The Modern Peasant: Adventures in City Food, won the 2014 Fortnum & Mason Food Book of the Year. She has written for various newspapers and magazines as a pamphleteer she has published on Elizabeth David's marginalia and the food of Marguerite Duras. She is also planting and maintaining an edible tree and meadow garden around a nineteenth century stone cowshed in North Devon

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# Dr Ffion Reynolds & Angharad Evans

## Heritage, ritual & the land: public archaeology at Bryn Celli Ddu, Ynys Môn

Bryn Celli Ddu ('the Mound in the Dark Grove'), is an important site, especially if you like Neolithic archaeology, solar alignments, rock art and visiting stunning locations on Ynys Môn, a small island off the north-west coast of Wales, which boasts a lapidarium of stone monuments, and a remarkable geology of over 700 different types of rock. 2024 marks the 10th year anniversary of the Bryn Celli Ddu project, which started out as a tiny event under a gazebo. Today, it has developed into a large-scale project, with public archaeology at its core. Its main aim has been to better understand the monument's position in the wider landscape, and our archaeological excavations have proved that the area around Bryn Celli Ddu was in use for over 1,000 years.

To bring these discoveries to life, and to connect with new audiences, the project has creatively engaged with local communities, artists, museums, and art galleries. In 2023, more than 2,000 visitors came to Bryn Celli Ddu making this a standout event at a rural unstaffed Cadw monument with a variety of activities including heritage craft workshops, artist residencies, participatory art, performance, poetry, music and fire installations to archaeology and art exhibitions, the most recent focusing on the theme of 'heritage, ritual & the land'.

This paper will discuss the main archaeological discoveries made to date at Bryn Celli Ddu and explore the way that the project has created opportunities for creative intervention, for both artists and archaeologists. Bryn Celli Ddu has always been a place of pilgrimage, and this paper will seek to bring together the various strands of our work, and seek out why people value these places, and how this kind of work can be deeply rewarding, emotionally and spiritually.

Ffion Reynolds is an Honorary Research Fellow at the School of History, Archaeology and Religion at Cardiff University, where she received her PhD in Archaeology focusing on Neolithic worldviews in Britain. She works at Cadw, the historic environment service for the Welsh Government as the Senior Heritage Events & Arts Manager, overseeing Cadw's public programmes. She currently co-directs the Bryn Celli Ddu public archaeology landscape project, on Ynys Môn. Her research interests include the prehistory of Britain, rock art and prehistoric worldviews in Wales, and the UK and Ireland more generally.

Angharad Evans is co-director of Think Creatively and is an established participatory arts professional with extensive experience of developing, facilitating and project managing local and largescale participatory arts projects across Wales. She has worked at Bryn Celli Ddu over the past 10 years in various roles at the site as community engagement manager: creating, facilitating, and collaborating with local artists and the community through bespoke workshops that creatively respond to the land-scape, heritage, and archaeological excavations.

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# Sharron Kraus

#### Stepping into a Still Place: Annwfn and the Birds of Rhiannon

I am interested in the possibility of ritual creating a 'moment' or 'still place' we can step into which enables us to find temporary respite from both the chaos and turbulence of the world around us and our own more agitated mental states. This stillness and respite, though short-lived in actual duration, has an intensifying power and can feel like a pause from normal time, a stretching of time. Its effects can persist in the rest of our lives and strengthen us for the trials we encounter.

I will describe and aim to conjure this still, charged place/state with reference to a fictional enchanted place. Annwin, the Otherworld depicted in the ancient Welsh tales that make up The Mabinogi, seems a good metaphor for my purposes: it is the source of the magic that happens in these tales and is not a transcendental realm separated from the ordinary world, but is continuous with it, allowing the characters in The Mabinogi to encounter otherworldly creatures and themselves move freely between the two realms. 'Annwin' means something like 'inner world' or 'deep world', deriving from an ('in', 'inside') + dwfn ('world'). The still place I'm interested in is a kind of inner place we can move in and out of once we become aware of it.

My presentation will take the form of a combined talk and demonstration. By opening up a simple ritual space and inviting participants to enter into it, the content of the talk will unfold in a way that can be experienced and felt as well as apprehended intellectually

Sharron Kraus is a composer, musician and writer who takes inspiration from place, folklore, folk music and psychedelia. She recorded an album of soundscapes inspired by her surroundings whilst living in Mid Wales as well as a song cycle drawing on themes and characters from The Mabinogi. As well as her solo work, she has collaborated with an array of musicians, artists and writers including artist Arianne Churchman, poet Helen Tookey and writer Justin Hopper. She is a celebrant-in-training and is interested in the ways meaningful ritual can be created and incorporated into our lives. She holds a D.Phil. in Philosophy from the University of Oxford.

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# Patricia Brien & Su Fahy

## Performing Resistance: Magnoxia, A River Haunting

Ritual healings and communal creative interventions

The Severn River, its estuary and extending flow into the Bristol Channel are unique waterscapes which define place, heritage and local mythologies. This tidal river is a deeply significant waterway, home to multiple and emerging entanglements of nonhuman entities and ecosystems. It is a vital source and landscape where diverse peoples have dwelled, worked and dreamed over millennia. In the post-industrial era, these waters and surrounding landscapes are home to a cluster of decommissioning and forthcoming nuclear power stations.

In response to the nuclear proliferation along the Severn Estuary and Bristol Channel the short film project, Magnoxia, A River Haunting was created combining different research areas and practices focused on and with the Severn River. The zero-budget film brought diverse practitioners to participate in a creative intervention based around using ritual as a form of healing. This presentation discusses the blending of different practices in performing resistance and the importance of mythmaking and storytelling as a way to articulate ecofeminist protest.

Patricia Brien is a UK-based curator, artist and researcher. She is currently a lecturer in Historical and Critical Studies at Bath Spa University. Her praxis is based around ecofeminist modes, multispecies thinking and pagan relationality. p.brien@bathspa.ac.uk

Su Fahy is an artist and curator working in fine art, principally drawing and photography. Fahy's research utilizes the aura of the documentary photographic image in order to interrogate and contextualize our readings of natural or architectural environments. Working principally to commission, Fahy engages with theorists, photographers and archive materials with a view to producing images for collaborative publication or exhibition. Recent projects have included Fugitive Testimonies (2009-2019) an artist led archive, Severn Worlding (2022) including the production of a short form artist film Performing Resistance: Magnoxía, a River Haunting and Postcards for Perec (2021) a World Book Night Artists' Collective Publication and touring exhibition (2021-24).

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# Emily Unsworth White and Ruth Sidgwick

The Save Our Avon pilgrimage was an intimate journey taken by boat, tandem bicycle and foot along the River Avon in June 2023. Spanning 83-miles from source to sea, the Avon passes through three counties, rising in Gloucestershire and exiting in the Severn Estuary. As the River travels through the land, it feeds villages, towns and the highly populated cities of Bath and Bristol. Over three days, poet Megan Trump, artist Emily Unsworth White and Oxford University PhD candidate Grace Wright Arora set out to follow the River's route. Entering at the bustling Bristol River swimming spot Conham Park, the trio made their long way upstream to the source, Joyce's pool in the quiet village of Didmarton.

Journeying at the height of summer, Megan, Emily and Grace dipped along the route, entering the water with fellow swimmers and all that bobs and glides within water. Drifting through habitats, some human, others wildly wooded and heavy with the hum of undergrowth. As the water carried our pilgrims, they witnessed those living, working and playing within the waterway. Following the flowing water, flourishing with life.

A wish fulfilled, to better know the river itself, in all its forms. To better know the people of the river, those whose lives it also passes through. For the river picks them up along the way, accumulating pollution, sewage and pleasure.

This pilgrimage culminated on the 17th of June 2023 in a ceremony of marriage between Megan Trump and the River Avon. In communion with friends and family, water collected at the River's source anointed the union. This marriage signified the pilgrims' commitment to the waterway at the Save Our Avon event and in the ongoing Conham Bathing campaign.

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# Ethan Pennell

## The Dartmoor Folklore Project: Revenge of the Land Spirits

The Dartmoor Folklore Project is the latest manifestation of my attempt to find a language that honours our interconnection with place and the non-human. It continues and refines my Master's research on folklore's capacity to promote ecological awareness through engagement with the land.

The Project's key ingredients, folklore and storytelling, can act as a bridge of communication between the western so-called rationalistic mindset and an analogical,

participatory way of knowing common to indigenous cultures. This latter form is described by anthropologist Susan Greenwood as 'Magical Consciousness', a more sensory approach that recognises connections between body, mind and spirit. Greenwood draws inspiration from the visionary poet and artist William Blake, who also recognises the importance of seeking psychic reintegration if we are to fully heal as a species. This worldview is in essence shamanic and animist.

In this presentation, I highlight stories that honour non-humans, especially the non-corporeal, such as Land Spirits and revenants. My vision of 'wellbeing' incorporates this interconnection and I will attempt to explain this further throughout the presentation. The Dartmoor Folklore map takes centre place, serving as a key to liminal spaces, the eldritch and Otherworlds. Here, enchantment reigns supreme, moss-drenched, mist-shrouded and many-hued. One story featured on the map that truly embodies 'magical consciousness' has recently been retold and repurposed. During the 2023 protests against the wild camping ban on Dartmoor, its Guardian Spirit, Old Crockern, was called upon to help fight the cause. This is not the only Dartmoor land spirit to fight back.

Ethan is a Devon-based artist, writer and therapist whose practice draws upon environmental issues, folklore and the Occult. He is particularly inspired and frequently haunted by the eldritch tales of Dartmoor, his local stomping ground. Ethan is currently working on an illustrated book about the moor's folklore. It serves as a companion piece to the recently published Dartmoor Folklore map, a moorland guide to the enchanted world of ghosts, pixies, The Devil, witches, wisht places, legends, strange phenomena and more. Seven years in the making, this map has been a true labour of love.

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# Dunya Kalantery

BECOMING-LIKE-LICHEN: reproducing symbiosis through intergenerational, interspecies collaboration.

I will be presenting my work as a stone carver, what I have learnt about stone carving from thinking through lichen, and to present some nascent explorations on the role that interspecies collaborations and ritual play in my own healing. For me, rock carving is a process of excavation; revealing stories of deep time held in the earth, and in matter. I have discovered that while carving rock, I engage in a somatic experience of excavation (of matter and of myself). Lichens follow their own temporal logic in their internal makeup, and their co-creative functioning. As an organism, they disrupt the score of linear, evolutionary time. They fertilise the world through their metabolic processes, weathering and digesting rock to unlock minerals that are necessary for the creation and sustenance of life in otherwise inhospitable environments. Releasing stories and life trapped in inanimate form, they materially expand the past into and beyond the living present -a process that is similar to narrative trauma therapies. They show us that to draw on something from the deep past and digest it at the brink of the just-becoming is notpastiche, but a symbiotic process of cocreation; of becoming, possibility forming, and world making.

I am a British born, Iranian/Croatian artist, educator, writer and researcher based in London. As a storyteller and facilitator, my work is concerned with working with/in ecologies; using ritual, matter and physical environments to explore displacement; belonging; plasticity; play; trauma and healing. My practice sits at the border of collaborative storytelling, radical pedagogy, healing and public art; spanning sculptural objects, artist publications, image making, and performance. I am a doctoral studentin the Art and Media department at Aalto University, Helsinki. The title of my PhD is: BECOMING-LIKE\_LICHEN: (re)learning symbiosis through initergeneratoins, interspecies collaboration

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# Hannah Kershaw (Rollings)

#### 'Working the land, Painting the Land, The Broomsquires of the Devils Punch Bowl'

As a smallholder and painter, I am interested in the educational value of working landscapes and lost traditions specifically here the Broomsquires of the heath who would live and work making besom brooms from the heather and birch found in the heathland at the Devils Punch Bowl, Surrey.

My practice led PhD research has seen me develop participatory activities picturing trees for wellbeing and education; 'From Screen to Green, Re Connecting Children to Nature through the Picturing of Trees in the Narrative Non-Fiction Picturebook'.

Continuing to work in an autoethnographic approach working plein air through walks and large-scale painting. I hope to bring to life the immersive location and elements of ritual surrounding the Broomsquires. Making brushes and mark making devices through an attempt to rekindle the traditional besom broom craft. My current painting practice comes from a need and desire to reconnect with nature. As I have spent many years making images through a fractured process. Layered hand painted images compiled digitally due to the commercial requirements of freelance illustration work requiring changes and flexibility.

My research has led me to immerse myself in nature spending time to document specific places alongside the welcomed problem of creating more permanent images that are more ambitious in scale. I have found a liberation in this process of plein air/reportage documentation that picture the unique aspects and atmosphere of personal experiences moving away from more literal representations. The tools in which I use to further problematise this practice gives another rich sense of place. By creating and facilitating an immersive experience I hope to counter the 'nature deficit disorder' outlined by Richard Louv in 2005 and practice what I preach 'from screen to green.' Establishing an experiential process 'Painting the land.'

Hannah Kershaw (Rollings) (b.1985, UK) In 2014 embarked on a practice based AHRC funded PhD through Kingston University and the London Doctoral Design Centre looking at picturing trees where her love of nature and the pull of the outdoors gained further importance in her practice. Working collaboratively with the Forestry Commission and school children developing site specific interactive work that sought to encourage a reconnection with nature, 'From Screen to Green'.

Through painting plein air, Hannah seeks to connect with her surroundings through an immersive painting experience exploring an emotive response to colour and mark making. Culminating in a practice that sits somewhere between abstraction and representation.

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# Rajni Patel

# Old Skills New Ways: Being with trees, making with wood and it's contribution to emotional health and wellbeing.

Old Skills New Ways is an action-research project created in 2018 responding to the absence of traditional making skills as part of a core skillset learned by young people. It examines the interdependency across cultural heritage, technical skills, health and wellbeing through making and nature connection activities with children and young people. Our presentation will explore how connecting with nature through making in the woods has a profound impact on wellbeing and supports children of all backgrounds and abilities and needs to flourish. It illustrates how the activity of making with wood, through being with trees, illuminates the reciprocal and restorative relationship between the human and other than human world.

Now, more than ever, research is recognising the positive impact that spending time in nature can have on children's wellbeing. Old Skills New Ways helps school's to foreground the relationship between being well and doing well by taking the children back into nature. We examine how connection with nature for children and young people can promote increased levels of creativity, leading to healthy, whole human beings. Old Skills New Ways seeks to address the disconnection between the way in which young people learn and the embodied wisdom of place. We retell the students' journey of how they connected with nature across the 6 years of the project learning about the natural world in a natural way.

We share how the OSNW approach nurtures children's understanding of natural habitats and processes, whilst also enriching their cognitive, linguistic, social and emotional skills. Illustrating how woodland landscapes provide a multi-sensory environment which reduces stress, stimulates creativity through playfulness and helps build confidence and self-esteem. We love being with trees & making with wood and Old Skills New Ways mission is to support children & decision makers to join in a knowing, loving & healing relationship with nature.

I'm an artist-maker with a 23 year body of practice across arts in the community and green woodworking. I've had a parallel career as a creative producer/curator and since 2010 Relationship Manager with Arts Council England. I care about every child having the right to explore their creativity and to develop their connection with nature. In 2017 I was awarded a Winston Churchill Travelling Fellowship in partnership with the Heritage Crafts Association to research traditional and contemporary craft practice in India and Japan. The Fellowship galvanised my thinking about developing a holistic approach to craft education unifying practical skills, nature connection and wellbeing into seasonal learning programmes for schools. As a result in 2018 I set up Old Skills New Ways (OSNW)

www.oldskillsnewways.org

# Sara Trillo

# Exploring lost landscape features and vanished settlements

My paper will outline my work exploring lost landscape features and vanished settlements, and the largely obscure myths attached to these places. As a visual artist making sculptural pieces incorporating material uncovered from these sites, I will discuss how I fuse studio output with narratives based on research I uncover into their layered histories. In recent commissions I have tried to give additional agency to the stories behind works by inviting public participation, and I will describe three such projects. Firstly, I will discuss Bring up the Boat, 2019. For this project I buried, on Margate Sands, a reeded "boat" I had made, commemorating an Anglo Saxon saint, Ymar, buried in Margate. An audience was encouraged to assist in excavating the site of the buried boat and to speculate on what they were uncovering. The finds were displayed in a gallery with rituals and readings taking place on St Ymar's Day. Secondly, I will discuss Walking the Deer Line, 2022, three different walks I led across Thanet tracing an ancient, eroded ridgeway formed in legend by the running of a saint's pet deer. I will discuss using a cloak to double as a map of the route, and as a component of rituals performed during the walks, as well a prop for narratives I shared. Finally I will discuss how my approach to this walk was expanded in Holloways and Hideaways, 2023, commissioned by Od Festival. These walks followed sunken lanes and holloways, and fused tales of historic smuggling exploits in Somerset with a discussion of the eroded landscape setting. I worked with Community Clay in advance of the project to make smugglers talismans, and will talk about giving participants momentos to keep as part of the shared group experience.

Sara Trillo is a visual artist based in East Kent. She has exhibited work widely in the UK and northern Europe, as well as undertaking funded residencies in diverse locations including Château de Sacy, Picardie, France (2021); Eastside Projects, Birmingham (2019); Frûctose, Dunkerque, France (2019); and Arnis, Germany (2018). Recent commissioned projects include "Holes in the Landscape" for the Triennale Art and Industry in Dunkerque, France (2023): "Walking the Deer Line", for 1922 Theatre and Kent County Council (2022): "Hortorium" for "Sunken Ecologies", Margate Now (2021): and "Lomea" for "Precarious Straits", TOMA/Estuary Festival commission, Southend-on -Sea (2021).

See: https://www.saratrillo.co.uk

# Rima Staines

#### Artist as Amulet-Maker

As a lifelong artist with a specific focus on the liminal realms, my long-held belief in the alchemical power of art to change things has coincided in recent years with my own traumatic life-experiences (most notably the arrival of epilepsy) to give birth to an ongoing amulet-making project - an experiment in transmuting pain, using art as real tangible medicine, beyond theory. These amulets are a series of oil paintings on wood - a medium I have worked with for years - but here they also include other dimensions and materials: thread, metal, spells, thorns, hair, soil, prayers.

I will present an exhibition of the amulets I have created so far alongside a talk, showing that this is a continuation of an ancient human practice and need – we have used the power of image-making to address difficulty, to heal pain, to straddle worlds and to speak to God since the beginning. Through the vulnerabilityand potency of this work I hope to reawaken a sense of urgency in re-imbuing art with this numinosity so that it may perform its true function in human life.

Rima Staines is an artist whose work straddles myth, magical realism and the folk arts. Her visual world is an umber and madder-infused chapel of misfits and magicians, story-rich and alchemical. Her paintings, which feel both ancient and familiar at once, have been exhibited and published internationally. In 2018 she was a finalist in the 'Best Artist' category of the World Fantasy awards. Her work is a kind of "Iconography of the Otherworld".

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# Courtenay Crawford

## Landscapes of liberation: socially engaged meditation and the cultivation of radical wellbeing

The wellbeing impacts of mindfulness practice are well documented, but often restricted to assessing impact according to individualized measures of psychological health and productivity. Those weaving together meditation with social and political engagement, however, typically see the wellbeing effects of meditation practice as extending beyond the individual, and as prompting processes of emergent change in the world. Drawing on my ethnographic fieldwork with those practicing socially engaged meditation in the UK, this paper will map how meditation, when put in the service of social change, engages an expanded understanding of wellbeing as ecological, relational and intimately connected to justice. Whilst the use of meditation as a tactic of protest has become increasingly visible, the forms activism takes when guided by this vision are expansive, and value the personal, local and embedded as valuable sites of change.

Those practicing socially engaged meditation frequently draw on Buddhist ontologies and cosmologies and combine secular and spiritual or religious practice in highly idiosyncratic ways. Here, the meditative self is understood as a gateway to relational transformations with other minds, bodies, ideas, physical and cosmological forces and possibly divine or supernatural beings. Using thematic analysis from my interview data, I will explore the tensions and paradoxes that emerge through trying to relate to world and self otherwise, whilst becoming aware of one's own cultural, material, ontological and epistemic complicity in landscapes of social and ecological harm. I ask what it means to move from wellbeing to liberation through the effort to embody and make manifest peace and love.

My doctoral research is focused on the interconnections between Buddhist praxis and activism. I'm interested in how different approaches to understanding the world work in tension and synergy with each other. My research methodologies seek to disrupt taken for granted dualisms in geographical theory and look for complexity, relationality and paradox. I'm happy to talk more on this and other related topics including the intersections between spirituality, psychology, philosophy and politics as well as deep ecology, decoloniality and anything curious or thought provoking.

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# Tim Hutton

#### The Return

This presentation looks at ways of creating more life affirming relationships with Nature. It explores what it means to belong and asks what it is we most need. It is a gentle catalyst for change.

Severance, the Journey, and the Return mark three stages of a traditional Pilgrimage, or Vision quest. In modern quests the importance of the Return to community, the Integration, is sometimes underestimated but it is a vital part in embodying change and growing a sense of belonging. Following a pilgrimage many years ago, I returned to the land and village where I had grown up. My life since then has been an exploration of how to bring a more reciprocal relationship to the land while still living with all the pressures of the modern world. It has involved growing food, planting trees, raising animals, managing for conservation, making craft and art and supporting other people; all the activities involve working with head, heart and hand.

Growing these connections are vital parts of our return to nurturing healthy relationships. They reconnect us with what we have lost, and what we long for most. All are essential strands towards a thriving live. The objects on the Round Table have a connection to land I grew up on and have tended for 25 years. They are made by friends, family and myself. Each one tells a different story and looks at themes of change, loss, aging, belonging, ritual, celebration, self care, and repair. It is a continually changing and evolving work. The layout is inspired by the Eight directions and the concentric circles are a reference to Joanna Macy's idea of the emergence of an ecological self.

Tim Hutton is an artist, craftsman, woodsman, rewilder of the land and founder of The Wild Circle, hosting retreats in Nature. For 25 years he worked as a professional Yurt Maker in Cornwall, visiting Mongolia and Kirgizstan to meet yurt makers and learn the craft. He has trained as a Nature Connection Guide, recently completing The Circle of Trees, an Art Therapy Training with Marianne Siddons Heginworth. His work explores pathways back to a more life affirming relationship with the natural world.

# JLM Morton

# Source Material: a local history of water

What does it mean to feel a sense of kinship with a watery environment which is constantly in flux, always already elsewhere, always already made, an element older than light?

Source Material is a project which began when I swam-walked and trespassed 23 miles from the source of the River Churn at Seven Springs in Gloucestershire to its confluence with the River Thames at Cricklade in Wiltshire. The Churn is my 'home' river – I've known it for over forty years. I played in and around it as a child growing up in Cirencester, watching the water voles, paddling and fishing for snotty dogs and minnows, shooting along it on tractor inner tubes where the flow ran high at the water meadows. I have never felt as if I owned the river, but rather that I belonged to it. Over the course of one summer, I made my way along the watercourse, trying with failure and success as my constant companions to access the Churn and wade or swim in its waters.

Based on the field notes which I made with photographs, video, writing and in the archive of my own body, the presentation will explore a relationship with this river, influenced by formative experiences of rave culture and an interest in land rights, river access and the climate emergency.

I will explore the significance of water to ancestry, focusing on ideas of family and origins: kith, kinship, and my personal connection to the land and the river and the return to the land of my childhood after living away for decades, drawn home by the death of my father.

The journey strengthened my bond with the landscape in unexpected ways, as I developed an intimate embodied attachment to place. The discovery of hyper local, ancient Romano-Celt mother goddess worship and ritual linked to the river provides a framing for a new relationship of nurturing care and kinship.

JLM Morton is a writer and poet whose work explores rural identity and belonging, ancestry, place and practices of care, repair and solidarity across human and other-than-human worlds. Winner of the Laurie Lee, Geoffrey Dearmer, Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust Poetry and International Dylan Thomas Day prizes, her work is published widely including in The Poetry Review, The Rialto, Magma, Poetry Birmingham, Places of Poetry, Sunday Telegraph and recently in Living With Water (Manchester University Press, 2023). In 2023 she was longlisted for the Nan Shepherd Prize. Her first full poetry collection Red Handed is forthcoming with Broken Sleep Books (2024).

Find her online at: www.jlmmorton.com

# Exhibition Images of practice research

Sarah Bellasario Libby Bove Patricia Brien Becky Dodman Wainwright Su Fahy Katie Forrester Leah Gordon Dunya Kalantery Maz MacNamara Isi Mackintosh Emily O Kelly Ethan Pennell Hannah Rollings Melanie Rose Sara Trillo Emily Unsworth White Emily Wilkinson Lucy Wright

#### Workshop 1

# Chris Taylor: Nature Constellations

Rebecca Finney:

'Charms, sigils and spells for ecological regeneration'

Discover your intuitive ability to experience the consciousness of the natural world. Using an approach derived from indigenous cultures we explore the needs and flows of nature while answering your questions about any natural topic - from climate change, to gardening, pet behaviour to deforestation.

As humanity's relationship with the rest of nature becomes more remote and more exploitative so our health suffers - both mentally and physically. Nature Constellations can show us the path towards healing and reconciliation - on a personal level and more widely. Find answers to your questions; experience the wisdom of nature. No prior experience necessary.

Participants:20

The 'Charms' workshop is a continuation of Rebecca's artwork Fraxinus Excelsior, a pencil & charcoal drawing on paper and a collection of 'Ash charms'. The drawing depicts an Ash tree; its branches interwoven with Ash themed texts: Yggdrasil from the poetic Edda, Axis Mundi, Venus of the Woods, and verse by W. H. Auden. The accompanying charms an ancient form of sympathetic magic (rural medicine) with which the tree has much association. Each charm is a combination of text on paper bound round an Ash twig with thread and promises its keeper strength and resilience.

Participants:10-12

Workshop 2

Chris Taylor has been a freelance facilitator and coach for 17 years. Increasingly he is bringing magic, intuition and flow into the heart of his practice. Chris is a poet, a tai chi teacher and an organic grower. He lives at Canon Frome Court intentional community in Herefordshire.

Rebecca Finney is an artist whose practice is rooted in place and entangled with the natural world. Her work is a blend of making – drawings, paintings and artist books – alongside socially engaged projects that have community cohesion, art for all and wellbeing at their heart. An academic, she teaches degree level Creative Practice in Context and leads a social drawing group at Hereford College of Arts.

# Workshop 3 **Ralph Nel**Runic Meditation Drawing

Workshop 4
Eleanor Mulhearn and
Desdemona McCannon:

Dream Votives

Inspired by Dendromancy, trance, and theories of Odin's acquisition of the Runes this drawing workshop will guide participants through an accessible meditative, and divinatory drawing process. Softly ceremonial, the process requires you to open yourself to the perception of other voices to whisper through in co-creation of the artwork. Working with dry materials, including powdered graphite and pencils, we'll create a messy ground that forces us to relinquish any control over our drawings - and then slowly work into this mess, discovering Runes, motifs, patterns, and more.

Participants:15

We believe that liminal play involving small rituals around threshold states of waking

dreaming are a strategy for wellbeing. Participants will engage in a workshop in which they identify personal dreams, hopes, concerns and embody these thoughts into small votive clay pieces, by making, or writing with slip on paper. We will make slip painted thumbpots and finally, the artefacts will be placed into these and added to a Dream House, inspired by and adapted from the Egyptian Soul House. Water poured onto the House acts as an agent of transformation to carry our throughts.

Participants:15

Ralph Nel is a Cornish, Plymouth-based drawing and performance artist who creates workthat draws on folk belief, animism, land-connectedness, and pre-Christian spirituality. Ralph's practice is highly meditative and softly ceremonial. It often incorporatessymbology of Runes and Ogham, divination, pre-Christian Northern Animistic practices like trance, Norse Seidr, and spell-singing or 'Galdr'. Utilising forgotten techniques likeSilverpoint drawing and natural pigments, Ralph relinquishes control and invites the 'agencies' of the non-human to co-create the work.

Eleanor Mulhearn is a practitioner and lecturer, working with the theme of enchantment. She uses diverse combinations of materials, often creating

figurative works at miniature scale. These often combine with moving image and animation to produce installations. Workshop facilitation is also central to Eleanor's practice. Since 2000, Eleanor has worked across diverse fields of design and arts practice, moving forwards from freelance animation work, to her current practice in interpretation of archives and folklore.

Desdemona McCannon is a writer, illustrator, maker and lecturer with an interest in the constellation of ideas, skills and practices held by the word 'folk'.