

CORNWALL 365: Signals Received by Simon Persighetti. 9 February 2017

Artist and Mis-Guide, Simon Persighetti was invited by Cornwall 365 to act as a 'Professional Listener' at the Cultural Ambassadors Celebration held at The Old Bakery, Truro, 9th February 2017. He came wearing special sensors that he claimed to be a miniature version of the famous Goonhilly Earth Station.



PROLOGUE:

Myttin Da, I am Simon Persighetti. Today I will be here in The Old Bakery, Truro operating as a listening station, gathering the ideas, creative conversations, atmospheres and ambience of the day. I will pick up on the zeitgeist of this event and will analyse the cultural data, goodies, tips and bright moments being shared between you. Finally these signals will be composed into a short, 'broadcast' that transmits the key signals of the day back to you, the shining satellites in Cornwall's arts, heritage and tourism galaxy. Let us all listen to each other while I tune in to you.

The Broadcast:

Notes from the Cornwall 365 Cultural Ambassadors Celebration -
Old Bakery Studios, Truro, 9th February 2017

The event at the Old Bakery was a celebration of the achievements and ambitions of Cornwall 365. The old warehouse became a one-day silo of images, news, ideas and opinions being sifted through in an exposition of Cornwall's rich store of culture and heritage. The key element of the day was to highlight the artistic outputs and initiatives being planned for 2017-18 in order to inspire the people who literally are the gatekeepers of tourism in Cornwall. The sharing of such information and ambitions is seen as a means of creating partnerships and networks that can benefit all the cultural, artistic, heritage and tourism activators and workers of Cornwall. In creating such exchanges there is a greater chance of promoting such initiatives, events and venues to guests and visitors from within and far beyond Cornwall. As the day began I went outside the building and encountered an early arrival who told me that she runs a guesthouse in Falmouth, is a blue badge tour guide and owns a licensed team of working donkeys. The skills alluded to in a short encounter with just one of the day's ambassadors with her varied set of interests, expertise and local knowledge provided a clue that would influence the way I listened for the rest of the day. I hope this will be helpful in reflecting upon the many signals picked up throughout the varied Cornwall 365 programme we were exposed to.

The welcome and introductions to the day included presentations by Charlie Gray and Fiona Wotton announcing the funding bid success for continuation and further development of the project. (Cornwall 365 is part of the Arts Council England and Visit England's Cultural Destinations programme.) There was acknowledgement that all present were, in principal, members of *the Culture Club* who, by occupation or participation are involved in various ambassadorial roles within Cornwall.

As a networking event, participants were introduced to FACEBACK, a game which Katie Etheridge, its inventor, describes as, *An antidote to online social networking, playing with ideas of community, face to face contact, and control over your own images, setting in train a series of random one-on-one encounters over a number of hours or days.*

All people present took part in the challenge and had their faces turned into a badge worn by someone they had not yet met. Their mission was to get their FACEBACK! Through the day I saw a number of delightful encounters and conversations sparked by this exchange of faces. <https://katieetheridge.com>

Many people present had already attended other similar events such as the *Canape* gatherings at Heartlands, World Heritage Site and Carnglaze Caverns with such sessions peppered by cultural activities. We were given a broad picture of past initiatives and success stories such as the on-line Digital Toolkit including its Knowledge Bank that "gets under the skin of Cornwall" and the user-friendly creative maps developed through public participation and designed by Keith Sparrow. The relationship between the arts and tourism is clearly illustrated currently by the positive impact of the BBC Poldark TV series. The growth in visitor numbers attracted to Cornwall provides a clear national and international example of the relationship between popular culture and tourism. However Cornwall 365 also acknowledges the incredible range of traditions, celebrations, heritage sites and arts activities that are homegrown and unique to our physical and cultural geography.

We learnt a huge amount about the organisational plans for 2017 and beyond. Fiona Wooton talked about the need to increase content in terms of the ways in which information can be channeled between the tourist agencies, creatives and visitors. This includes, among other projects, 365 involvement in:

The introduction of a Cornwall Transport App. capable of delivering live travel information to mobile phones.

Developing effective ways of measuring the impact of different culture/tourism initiatives and activities.

Forming and promoting regional clusters of Cultural Ambassadors including the recruitment of Young Ambassadors.

Offering training opportunities in the development of knowledge and skills for creative industries via *Cultivator* at Krowji. <http://creativeskills.org.uk>

As the day unfolded, brilliantly hosted by Becca Mordan of Scary Little Girls, the menu of cultural events being planned or programmed throughout Cornwall was impressive. On an epic scale, Sue Hill of Wildworks spoke about the new Cornwall version of *Wolf's Child* being produced on the Trelowarren Estate for July 2017. Sue Hill could be regarded as the Cornish Queen of Culture in her incredible contribution to the artistic landscape through her earlier theatre work with Kneehigh and artistic direction at the Eden Project. She described the *Wolf's Child* as "an encounter with the darkness and the wild". This immersive journey-show will look at the relationship between humans and the animal world. The audience will "...start as humans but at some point in the journey see the human being through the eyes of an animal."

The day's programme included comic, charismatic performances by Edward Rowe/Kernow King, who is currently touring his show about the great inventor, *Trevithick*, directed by Kneehigh's Associate Director, Simon Harvey, starring Kernow King and actress Mary Woodvine. His use of story and comedy as a vehicle to talk about the unique qualities of Cornish life and language makes him an indisputable cultural ambassador. There were also presentations from Hall for Cornwall, The Bernard Leach Pottery. Arwen Fitch (Tate Press & Communications Manager) brought updates on new developments at Tate St Ives, scheduled to re-open 31st March 2017. It is worth noting that on record this gallery hosts over 260,000 visitors per year and, along with the Eden Project, must be very significant in bringing people to Cornwall. The new extension to Tate Gallery will double the footprint of the current building and opens in Autumn 2017. Hall for Cornwall projects and the Cornwall bid for Capital of European Culture were also discussed and usefully illustrated the sense of optimism and creativity that emanates across the territory.

Theatre Companies such as Miracle, known for their work in amazing locations also announced new projects, promising a production of *The Third Policeman* by Flan O'Brien and the online launch of their beautiful winter show *Cinderella* available on Miracle Youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCwRoLzuSGYTdCA1YwwQkKlg>

Anna Maria Murphy spoke about the great community of creativity that exists in Cornwall and discussed Kneehigh Theatre projects including *The Rambles*, an on-going performance collection she described "as true stories, anecdotes and hidden tales ...that become wildly exaggerated". You can get a flavour of this work on http://www.kneehigh.co.uk/page/rambles_projects.php She also announced the return to Cornwall of their internationally renowned *Tristan & Yseult*, 5-9 June 2017 at the The Minack Theatre.

Throughout the event, the 2017 *Causley Centenary Celebrations* were highlighted through pop-up poetry readings from Giles King and Keith Sparrow. More performance texts came from Andrew Fentham, the current writer-in-residence at Cyprus Well and his mentor, the poet and art activist, Mac Dunlop.

This theme of spoken word and literature was further explored by Jane Darke in her introduction to her new documentary film, *The Poet*, about the life and work of Charles Causley. <http://www.janedarke.co.uk/the-poet-charles-causley/>

Perhaps the most complex presentation of the day came from cultural consultant and Bard of the Cornish Gorsedh, Ian Saltern, concerning the implications and opportunities of *Cornish National Minority Status*. We were reminded that the Council of Europe was originally set up after the 2nd World War to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. It granted Minority Status to Cornwall through the *Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities* in 2014.

"Parties to the Framework Convention undertake to promote full and effective equality of persons belonging to minorities in all areas of economic, social, political, public and cultural life together with conditions that will allow them to express, preserve and develop their culture, religion, language and traditions".

(Extract from Council of Europe Factsheet 2012)

Protection under the Framework means that, among other principals, the UK Government should:

- Recognise the right of Cornish people to use the Cornish language in public and to display information in the Cornish language.
- Try to ensure the use of the Cornish language for street and place names.
- Provide opportunities for Cornish people to learn the Cornish language.

I read into this an official recognition of the kinds of musical and poetic signals that I picked up through the day. It often falls to artists to bring to mind the hidden or silenced aspects of place. It is clear that Cornwall is rich in cultural activities, heritage and outstanding natural beauty that may lure countless visitors and tourists to this land and its glorious shores. However, it is important to think about the context in which all these inter-related activities of economics, culture and tourism take place. I was struck for example by the issue of Cornish identity as expressed on the Gorsedh Kernow display in the reception area of the building. The Gorsedh is concerned with, *Preserving the history and culture of a Celtic people through poetry, song, dance, music, art, sport and spoken word that stretches back to the story tellers - Bards of ancient Celtic countries*. I also read a leaflet entitled *Cornwall FOR EVER: A new way to explore Cornwall*, that usefully re-frames or suggests the ways in which people might have an even richer and more profound experience of the *Cornucopia* that is Cornwall. cornwallforever.co.uk

Some of these things can be consumed like food or drink or souvenir but such expressions of heritage and outstanding natural beauty may also amplify a rich, as yet unrecognised seam that runs through the Cornish experience. As such a re-visioning, re-visiting and recognising the maps, place names, stories and language of Cornwall might

bring a greater sense of identity to the people of Cornwall whilst amplifying the priceless quality of the place to countless visitors.

Whilst the major voices of the day were the artists displaying their wares, there were also the hidden voices of those who often provide the first point of contact for all who come to stay in Cornwall. My early encounter with the guesthouse-tour guide-donkey-owner prompted me during this exposition of visions and poetry to think about the potential of a symbiotic relationship between culture and tourism. The building where we shared this celebration had significantly been a place that once had been the conduit of one of our most fundamental means of survival- our daily bread. Here we were in the presence of people who's occupations are very much concerned with the art of hospitality. These are people who have a deep and daily understanding of the needs of travellers and a traveller's rest that might include the basic necessities of food and shelter. These are the transporters, travel agents, the hoteliers, the bar staff and bed & breakfast proprietors whose art of the everyday is a fundamental asset to the tourism industry and to the sense of how special Cornwall is.

As a listening station with my sensors I have not been able to capture all the messages and signals of the Cornwall 365 Cultural Ambassadors Celebration and anything missed I hope will be forgiven. Certain things resonate beyond words and I hope that I have found other ways of capturing some of those unspoken things. Let us all continue to listen to each other.

Simon Persighetti, February 2017

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Cornwall 365 Poem (written live on the day) by Simon Persighetti

Every day in Cornwall- 365 days a year Cornwall is Cornwall.
Cornwall is the biggest character in the experience,
Cornwall is the song on the shore and the landscape,
Whilst we dwelt in this warehouse new ideas and meetings have arisen,
Outside this building the mudflats of the harbour have been masked by high tide,
Cornwall is playing the changes of Cornwall 365 days a year.

I am calling to you Cornwall,
At this very moment, someone is looking at you on a digital tool kit,
I am calling to you Cornwall,
Cornwall, at this very moment someone is trawling through your digital apps,
They are looking for the embrace of your secrets,
In time and space and your sense of place,
they want to get lost between the gaps,
Cornwall be ready, there are thousands of people planning to walk on your maps:
They want to find your spirit:
your self-affinity, your self-identification, your dialect, your dance, your music,
your customs, your tolerance, your respect, your understanding,
And in the road sign and on cottage doors they will find your language and know that it
is you Cornwall who will write the script of their experience.
And in this warehouse of the senses we are listening for the signals
and minding the gaps between tourism, culture and heritage
For the sake of Wisdom, Truth and Love (*Rag Furneth, Gwir ha Kerensa*)



POSTSCRIPT: The Venue

This event was held in a *mid-19th Century waterside warehouse formerly occupied by Blewett's Bakery and is the last major building relating to Truro's historic trading functions to survive in the waterfront area, and forms an important landmark alongside the tidal waterway and on Malpas Road. The site of The Old Bakery is believed to be 400 years old, with the area known as Foot's Quays and the warehouse buildings probably being built on mud flats in 1836. It is believed the building was originally a corn mill owned by Trounsons in the 19th century, then Corn merchants HTP and then Spillers who also used the site before it became Blewetts Bakery.*

Adapted from http://www.historic-cornwall.org.uk/csus/towns/truro/csus_truro_report.pdf

POSTSCRIPT: The Venue (Continued)

There is always something extraordinary about the re-purposing of an abandoned building, particularly a place that has formerly been regarded as a hive of industry. As an artist and writer I have witnessed and sensed the way in which a silenced post-industrial building often seems to harbour many hidden sounds, voices and memories. People make places but people are also made by the geography, history and culture of place. An exchange of identities seems to occur as if we humans shape and speak to place but also learn the language of a place as we inhabit and interact with it. Such resonances can be amplified by artists through their various mediums and skills be they visual artists, writers or performers. Out of this kind of approach there have been many performances, events and artworks that are sometimes called, *Site-Specific* in that they are designed to reflect upon the particular story and evidence that a specific building or place holds in its very fabric. Perhaps this celebration has brought a new story or history to the Old Bakery and new things beyond flour and yeast may rise from its empty spaces? Perhaps some of the people who met through FACEBACK or read poems or shared some time together, or saw this building for the first time will return to this warehouse and make something new to add to the life and celebration of Cornwall.

Simon Persighetti, February 2017

Simon Persighetti is an artist and writer based in Cornwall who re-imagines towns through an active engagement with people and place. He is a core member of **Wrights & Sites**, well know for their *Mis-Guided* tours, events and publications. Their work is focused on peoples' relationships to places, cities, landscape and walking. They employ disrupted walking strategies as tools for playful debate, collaboration and spatial meaning-making. Simon has written plays for radio and stage, articles and poetry and co-authored *A Mis-Guide to Anywhere* (Wrights & Sites) and *Sardine Street* with mytho-geographer, Phil Smith. He regularly devises collaborative public arts projects with Katie Etheridge. <http://www.mis-guide.com> <https://katieetheridge.com>

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