

FIELD OF VIEW

David Fine



Den heb taras a gollas y dyr

A man without a language has lost his land

KERNOW

from the book *KERNOW A Land Apart*, Deborah King www.wingbeat.co.uk

To me this Cornish saying sums up artistic endeavour. How can you know where you are without words, music, dance, images and performance? It's what we do.

There's something intrinsically rural in this and, I think, every other kind of creativity. Not the hurly-burly of grant applications, gallery shows, critical reviews, but the very moment of creativity is somehow rural. Try substituting 'square', 'plaza', 'cloister' even, never mind 'cultural quarter', for the fields pictured here.



– Splat. It doesn't work. It is rural in the sense that you need to be where time and space are more or less the same. You can use time to give you the space to work in, or space to find the time to finish the work. It has precious little to do with money, which is merely a means to live while you're not creating. It's far closer to Virginia Woolf's Room of One's Own, the idea of retreat and, curiously, 'the zone' which in sport the best talk of and aspire to in their own fields.

It's the moment, the pin point, where process becomes product. Each world needs the other. The hurly-burlies need the creatives to hurly-burly with; the creatives need the hurly-burly for their work to go beyond the moment. So it worries me that these two worlds aren't talking to each other any more – divorced, not merely separated.

Within the creative industries and the arts especially, managing both people and process tends to fight against its own purposes. The millennial 'Year of The Artist', when artists themselves got to set the agenda, is becoming history not best practice. It's getting worse with the London Olympics 2012 slashing urban-based national support and acknowledgement for rural-based artists.

Although *Kernow*, the painting by Deborah King is irrevocably rural – endeavour, land and the sky are intimate links, which may only be broken by outside forces. *Den heb tavas a gollas y dyr* is Cornish too, a lost language. I fear we may soon lose the rural way of doing things.

This is immensely sad as well as aggravating, and for both worlds, since we share common goals – to create and share the rewards.

The photo shows the view from my study window. Instantly, a rural landscape: trees, field barns, wall-lines form a horizon at dusk. Above it an airliner's vapour trail traverses the slats of altostratus, perhaps forming on earlier trails. The arts funding and management world is up there, like the airliner, not so much head in the clouds as preoccupied with cruising speeds and altitudes, safety-drills – 'in the event of an emergency, oxygen masks will drop from the top of this paper and you will be asked to clear your desks' – and in-flight entertainment. Meanwhile the real thing, the creation of a programme, be it computer or dance, is going on below...

On the ground, you can see each stone in the walls, and sunshine through its chinks, the sheep grazing in the field, hear and smell them too. If you're concerned about immortality, sheep have been in that field for 300 years, from the days of Boswell and Johnson, and, since it's a Grade One Scheduled Ancient Monument for its medieval ridge-and-furrow, they're quite likely to be there for 300 more, at least.

Art in rural areas isn't about wickerwork, just as urban art isn't about graffiti. It's how artists understand and develop their practice regardless of medium or background. See for yourself. I was asked to write a poem about rural arts. It's on the next page.

After you've read it, ask yourself isn't all art, especially the most memorable and enduring, at its heart, somehow intrinsically rural - even or especially if its practitioners and audiences have never left a city?

May you never lose your language.

Set Aside

it takes time for things to settle,
 come to be, achieve recognition,
 grow
 old even
 perhaps die
 or left forgotten.

treasure that time: its celestial habit's
 no city-slick, tick-tock-token-tick-tock mangle-wurzel tick-tockery
 supa-kwik surly-burly mobile micro-managed sheer self-mockery.

no irrational arithmetic
 that seeks just to measure each well-formed tick,
 nor weigh countless fingers and thumbs
 in a ham-fisted digital display
 of last week's critical theory episode
 to no avail on all channels -
 except check reality...
 you can't grasp and snap a yardstick
 made from time itself.

clap or cack your hands,
 try both - even simultaneously;
 there's an art to these things:
 lines that dance, words that sing,
 blobs of print or pixels to muse upon.
 - you're beckoned to listen, watch, join in

and be still and poised as a tight rope walker
 barbs on a wire which balances frost each winter:
 touch, feel as gently you dare,
 smell what's in and isn't in the air,

for when we die, our work
 can only play outside ourselves
 in a country set aside for others

David Fine is a 54 year old poet and writer, who lives in Bakewell where his sense of the rural is mediated through a previous career as a landscape archaeologist.