**A Letter to Suzi Gablik:**

**Debbie Rees**

Hello Suzi,

Dear Suzi,

I started writing this letter in my mind a few times, something like having been a conduit for your words ... I was pleased to be invited .... you know the sort of thing, but it's been quite a week! I then began to try and picture you, but after this week-no not picture, to get an idea of you in my head. This might have been aided by a sci-if series I've been watching about a pre-existing human species of which a few remain amongst us, they are mentally and emotionally connected and so feel each other's joy and hurt as their own ...

I stopped making fine art soon after having studied sculpture at the start of the '80s. I then travelled, made clothes for a living, studied horticulture and worked in that sector then almost 9 years ago opted to live in a field in a caravan. My partner Julian and I set up a no-dig permaculture market with farm gate sales and supplying a few local shops.

About 4 years ago, feeling the lack, I started making work again. I think it was always in me to make art useful, useful art that arises from a livelihood and feeds back into it, a unity of art and life. Art Util has re-emerged as a movement in the U.K. while I was not-digging! It's affirming to come across a whole gamut of projects which support people and the planet and in which can be seen the possibility to evolve and build community, inform us and in also which we can collaborate, a healthy change from the exclamations of 'look at the bloody waste of resources' which I'm prone to. A few years ago I noticed a fluidity of members of Welsh bands - how musicians moved from one set of players to another, ego taking a lesser role, creativity trumping ego? (excuse the expletive). A long-established practice amongst musicians of course. Who said co-operation is a stronger drive in humans than competition? Maybe now is it's time?

Notwithstanding oppressive U.S. foreign policy - I'm reading the Naom Chomsky interviews 'Optimism over Despair', popular uprisings as recently as that in Honduras quashed by self-interest and now we have the horrific affliction that currently fronts Washington ...but ...we are many and the rise of the left, the Corbyn effect in these countries, popular leaders in South America, laws against ecocide are all positive.

In Wales, we have the 'The Wellbeing of Future Generations Act' policy decisions should be made in light of this, also a 'One Planet Development Policy' to try and aid people wanting to live sustainably on the land. We'll see, things are changing, fast enough? Definitely not. We have passed the tipping point climate wise, we're expecting 69mph winds today - but whatever is coming community will be all important.

A serendipitous encounter with the work of Manfred Max Neef the Chilean ecological economist at a workshop entitled 'Real World Economics' organised by one of the many Transition groups springing up has informed the collaborative work that I do with my partner, Max Neefs' model of is has at its' core 9 Fundamental Human Needs, is non-hierarchical and places the planet at the centre. It looks at pseudo satisfiers and satisfiers, when we get to the root of what our needs are we can begin to address them-again we cannot satisfy these needs in isolation.

Somehow, I haven't mentioned your 'Conversations before the end of time'. This week, your book, Fern Smith, all the lovely artists I have met, I'm still processing it. Initially I went through an anxiety wall, one that has needed a door putting in it for a looong time! I am so grateful to Fern for that and for introducing me to your work. Eight days starting with Trwco - Welsh for a kind of exchange, as a group we botanised with our 3rd eyes then followed what felt like a flowing amorphous mass of ideas, attentiveness, voices, ecology, wonder, connection, tea, blue pipe, nature, tiredness, ego, heat, uncomfortable chairs, labyrinths, tiredness, words, words, words, art, grief, centipedes, warmth, history and pragmatism.

25 years old and your work is still so current. The format in which Fern shared you work and conversations, embodying the words was inspired, enhancing the feeling that these ideas are still so pertinent and relevant to how we live our lives now. Of course in many ways things have got a lot worse in the last 25 years but I feel the only way we to avoid despair is to stay in the present, to connect with people - not something I always find easy.

I have found writing to you easy though, I hope it's as easy to read! Even though it would have benefitted me to find your work earlier in my life I think it was the right time for me to really take it in. I now have 'The Reenchantment of Art' to experience.

A heartfelt thank you,

Sending you much love,

Deb XXX

***Debbie Rees is an artist, grower and Director of Vegetable Agenda***