

## Thoughts on the Emergence Land Journey

It was a grand design if there ever was one. A figure 8, first traced through the Welsh mountains by the pen of curator Simon Whitehead, followed by forty pairs of boots. A journey without beginning, a journey without end.

The Emergence Land Journey was a one hundred mile circumference work of art – a mobile prelude to an insanely ambitious Summit conference, ‘Creating the Future’, held at the Centre for Alternative Technology (CAT) in the heart of Wales. People came and walked for many reasons: to take time out, to go on pilgrimage, to gather together in this great time of uncertainty and change.

The Land Journey was challenging for all who walked it. Five days that felt like fifteen, passing through every landscape, weather and experience imaginable. One needed perseverance, creativity and conflict resolution by turns.

Simon’s design for the Land Journey also included daily ‘visitors’ to the walkers – local artists who appeared from and disappeared back into the landscape: an Indian Film Star who taught a joyous Bollywood routine with the Cadair Idris range as a backdrop; a Welsh singer who sang a traditional song of a village with no water; a woman with a white horse speaking of the deep intelligence of the animal whilst tracing lines on its flanks; a wilderness artist drifting in the currents of the rivers or standing rock-still in the waters of Cardigan Bay. In this way the walkers absorbed soul-expanding stimulation on both conscious and subliminal levels as they went.

The walkers ended their journey – some delirious and unhinged, others wind-kissed and past caring – at CAT where they joined over a hundred other delegates for the culmination of the epic nine day Emergence Summit 2012.

And what did these walkers bring to the conference? They brought the land – on the soles of their boots and beneath their fingernails – the gentleness of the air and the vision–quest wildness of Wales. But they brought something more: they brought the heart and soul of Emergence.

So did they 'create the future'? There were results to be sure – new collaborations, continuing conversations and real-world projects. Other outcomes are harder to measure and might be the more powerful for it. But there is one outcome of which we can be certain – the walk continues.

In September 2013, another group of walkers set out to retrace the steps of the original Land Journey. They walked because they knew it is not only a practice creating the future – *it takes practice*. One walk does not a pilgrimage make. Some must make the decision to return; some must walk anew; we must find new routes, new destinations. Taking inspiration from teacher and eco-activist Satish Kumar, can we learn the art of being pilgrims on this planet of ours rather than merely tourists? The pilgrim walks with the spirit of emergence – their destination is unknown, the intention is all.

The great pilgrimage to create the future goes on...

**Fern Smith**