

“I see my role as gently guiding an individual’s dialogue with the land and their own internal connections”

Landscape is the natural and unique relationship that humans have with the land. By embracing this relationship I am able to set up a dialogue with the landscape. I do this by walking in it; listening to it; and exploring its history and the patterns that have been superimposed on it by humankind – both positive and negative. Through this careful, sensitive work I am able to develop a relationship and form a bond with the land. I see this bond as a reciprocal agreement whereby I can read the landscape at all sorts of levels, and allow it to read me; getting the measure of who I am, my intentions and how I work as an individual.

In working this way I connect back into the landscape’s history to understand the role it played for those who have been a part of that story. I use this knowledge and insight in different ways depending on the scope of my work: either as a way of introducing it to individuals or groups who want to connect with the land on their own journeys; or when making design interventions as a Landscape Architect.

I want people to be able to connect into the landscape at a deep level and to use the physical landscape to connect into their internal landscape. I help people to do this by facilitating a space for genuine encounter which is informed by my prior dialogue with a specific landscape.

Holding a knowledge of the landscape’s history and development in balance with insights into its energies and significance, I guide people as they walk through places such as the symbolic layout of Rousham in Oxfordshire or less managed areas like Blackdown in Surrey. As we read the landscape together, we explore how the features and atmospheres of the place speak to us and opening ourselves up to what it might have to say to us in the moment. I see my role as gently guiding an individual’s dialogue with the land and their own internal connections.

In some ways, reading the land is like reading a Tarot card. Take The Lovers card for instance: At first glance the card – like a landscape – is merely a composition of form and figures, colours and characters. With help from an experienced guide however, you begin to see the meaning and the symbolism that exists behind the image in front of you. Your guide is able to draw out what, in the image, in this moment, speaks to you and how that relates to your internal journey, your internal landscape.

The joy of the landscape – unlike the card – is that you can move through it in time and space, adding further dimensions and layers to your interpretation. Walking the land and engaging with it directly connects you to your ideas and imprints memories so that you can dialogue with the land using all of your senses. I most enjoy seeing people’s thoughts and ideas converge into an understanding as they make connections for themselves and find answers to questions that help them move forward in their own journeys. The joy for me is that, although the landscape plays a key role and I as guide play a role, it’s the individual who finds their own answers.

None of what we are looking at here is new to the world. This is exactly how we humans are meant to connect to the land. We read articles almost daily about the positive effects of walking in the landscape and how well-designed places improve our lives and wellbeing. We should not be surprised by this. We all have an innate ability to naturally connect to the land, and it is my delight to share my knowledge of how to do that with those I work with.

When we connect to places that are significant to us we discover a loving dialogue between our true selves which is resolved through our unique connection to the landscape. This is a natural process which is designed for living. It’s simple, it’s loving, it’s gentle and it’s effective.

In all of my work my role is to make vocal what needs to be drawn from the landscape: To be the mouthpiece of the landscape. Whether I’m working with an individual who is exploring their relationship with the land, or an organization who is responsible for the development of a place, I give voice to the landscape’s needs and bring to light what it has to offer for the future. It’s an act of mediation between people and place, and I am passionate about facilitating the best relationship between both.



“For some time now it has seemed to me that the two questions we should ask of any strong landscape are these: firstly, what do I know when I am in this place that I can know nowhere else? And then, vainly, what does this place know of me that I cannot know of myself?”

Robert Macfarlane,  
The Old Ways: A Journey on Foot

Jeremy Rye  
Studio

