

Rewilding the Artist Podcast
resting up collective episode, 'Grounded dreaming'

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Part One (circa 10 mins)

Jen: Welcome everyone, before we begin I wanted to explain that Gaia is currently unwell and won't be with us for this recording, but the things we discuss in the podcast are a direct result of an engaging and meaningful discussion that Gaia, Charlie and I had at the end of last year. There will be a podcast transcript in the show notes with hyperlinks to the references we discuss.

Charlie: For access purposes, the podcast structure will be as follows; we will introduce ourselves and Resting Up Collective, followed by a practical exercise called grounded dreaming. We will then discuss a series of questions related to how a culture of care manifests in Resting Up Collective.

Jen: Hello again, my name is Jennifer Brough, my pronouns are she/they. I am a slow writer and workshop facilitator based in Nottingham. I write poetry and short stories that explore the body, pain, horror, using a magical and surrealist lens. I am currently writing my first poetry pamphlet, *Occult Pain* and I review literature in translation. I envisioned and began Resting Up Collective.

Charlie: Hi all, my name is Charlie Fitz, my pronouns are she/they. I am a UK-based sick artist and writer. My work is rooted in a necessity to express and explore my lived experience of illness, disability and trauma, at present my work is concerned with heterotopic liminal spaces. I am a founding member of Resting Up Collective and a director of the remote artist studio Triad⁹.

About resting up collective

Jen: Resting Up is an interdisciplinary group of chronically ill and disabled friends practising slowness & crip time to create, think, and interrupt neoliberal pressures and expectations on the

body. Working at a slow pace, we operate using a 'who has capacity' model, to accommodate the different paces of our [bodyminds](#).

Jen: We have previously delivered free creative workshops online and in-person, are running the second iteration of a mail chain project called *Postcards from Flaresville* this year, and share resources on protesting while sick and disabled. We are working with other disability organisations to continue this ['revolution from bed'](#).

Charlie: We connected because of our overlapping energy-limiting illnesses and/or disabilities, but predominantly a desire to practise creative slowness and crip time. Within the collective, we also advocate for intersectional justice through a disability justice lens.

Charlie: Our group is made up of mostly queer, [crip](#), [precariat](#) members. However, many of us have access to white privilege, some of us have access to cisgender privilege, none of us live in warzones, most of us live in a country with a welfare state, many of us are university-educated, and some have access to healthcare that is free at the point of access. Therefore we think it's important to situate the identities housed in our collective and recognise where we have privilege even from within a marginalised community.

Intro to Grounded Dreaming

Jen: Grounded Dreaming is an idea that has been simmering for a while, as we are both dreamers with wild, expansive imaginations, but rarely enough capacity to creatively explore those imaginations.

Charlie: The idea found form in a conversation between Jen, Gaia and I in which Jen suggested that we dream of an idyllic crip space together. Using this space to imagine how things could be and try to translate and manifest these dreams into something compatible with our capacity in the waking world.

Jen: The idea also came from something Charlie suggested, about how when we commune remotely we create a temporary liminal space or portal, a heterotopic space.

Charlie: A [Heterotopia](#) is an idea from the [thinker Michel Foucault](#) and it refers to spaces or worlds within our world that sit outside of time, space, and the normal rules of society.

Jen: As it's the restrictive rules of society that often create barriers for our community, the spaces we create together aim to challenge typical rules or barriers.

Charlie: As such we suggest that when we meet as Resting Up Collective online or even now for this podcast we create temporary portals into heterotopic crip community spaces.

A creative invitation/exercise in grounded dreaming

Intro

Jen: In this invitation to dream we are going to ask you to imagine a space to hold community. For us these exercises ask what kind of crip utopias we can make, centred in a culture of care.

Jen: Based on the prompt: "Think of how you connect with sick and/or disabled comrades and your community. What are the barriers you face to this and how would you remove them in a world with no restrictions?"

Charlie: We have chosen this idea because Resting Up Collective has given us a space to hold community with our crip comrades in a way we didn't know was possible when we first became sick. Resting Up Collective, began with Jen's ability to dream and her invitation to myself and others to dream collectively.

Charlie: You can engage with this exercise in any way you like, you can do it now or come back to it at the end of the podcast or even another day when you have more time to dream. We encourage you to pause the podcast after each question and take some time to really dream your space.

Jen: We will be asking you to imagine the space, for some people this might be completely in their mind's eye, whilst others may choose to write, draw or audio record themselves speaking. We have also included [these exercises as a Word document](#) in the show notes, so you can return to them later.

The exercise

Charlie: Firstly, make sure you are as comfortable as possible.

Charlie: Now imagine somewhere you can hold space with your chosen community, whether that's friends, comrades, or the people/animals/plants you share your space with.

- Is this space physical or virtual? Does the space already exist or is it completely of your making?
 - Does it obey or break the laws of time and space?
 - Is this space in the past, present, future or even outside of time?
 - Are you on the earth, moon, or an imagined planet?
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- Does the space have a smell, sounds or a visual representation?
 - What does your space feel like?
 - Now that you have created your space, how do you share it with your community?

Jen: Who are the members of your chosen community? Do you know them already or are you yet to meet, but have things in common? When imagining your shared space, think about how it accommodates all the participants' capacity and access. For example, is the space the same for everyone who joins it?

- How do you invite people to join this space? How and when do you share this space? Are you all there together or is it more like a message board or collaborative exhibition, all contributing and taking part at your own pace?

Charlie: How do you communicate in the space? Are you communicating through words, images, sounds? Does your space act like the TARDIS in *Doctor Who* and automatically translate the languages of each participant? Perhaps the space is a frequency you can choose to tap into and communicate telepathically through.

- Now that you have dreamt of how to share your space with your chosen community, what do you do there? Do you share food, stories, art, knowledge? Do you create together? Are you connecting over a particular activity? Are you playing games together? Is it a space for organising and activism? Is it a space to share and heal?
- How do you feel when you leave this space? Have you used or gained any energy? Has any time passed? Are you somehow nourished?

Jen: We do not want to impose any limits on this exercise, your answers to the questions do not need to be finished or set in stone, this is an invitation to begin dreaming, so we will leave the finishing point open for you.

Exercise wrap up

Jen: We hope this exercise can offer you several things, firstly we want to invite you and give you permission to actively rest your bodymind and dream of somewhere else. Escapism is often vital for survival.

Charlie: We are frequently told that rest is a privilege and this is not the case, we need rest for survival and when it is taken from people, which it sadly frequently is, this is a breach of their human rights and basic needs. We do not want to contribute to language that positions rest in this way when it is frequently not optional/enjoyable for disabled and chronically ill bodies.

Jen: Secondly, we hope this space can guide you about what you want from your community and the barriers you may face to accessing this. This information can help you understand and communicate your access needs to your friends, colleagues, family and communities.

Charlie: We are aware that some of this may be idealistic but we hope by the end of this podcast some of what we have spoken about can translate into practical tools, as well as an invitation to active rest.

Part Two (circa 15 minutes)

Discussion questions

Question 1

Jen: To understand how collective dreaming connects to the culture of care, we will now explore the question how can we house collective dreaming and use it to create iri?

Charlie: To allow for grounded dreaming, finding a community is a great place to begin. In a time when so many bodies are policed/coded/stuck in capitalism, we feel that community and the friendships grown there are vital for survival.

Jen: In the workshops we've previously run, we've sometimes found that people who may not have identified as disabled/chronically ill/or the precariat because they did not feel 'sick/mad/poor' enough feel seen and continue to engage with us. Having permission to 'down tools' and rest or dream in a guided setting can be very liberatory.

Charlie: Creating or attending spaces that allow these moments of freedom and recognition can act as interruptions to the dominant structures that govern so many of us. Even formulating the exercise in our initial conversation with Gaia was an enjoyable act of communal dreaming.

Question 2

Jen: We will now offer some examples of how grounded dreaming can be used as a practical tool for community organising.

Charlie: Although this type of collective dreaming is not necessarily a go-to for many spaces, I think we can take some really important things about access and community away from this exercise.

I would suggest that it can even be a creative approach to understanding our own access requirements and writing something like an [access rider](#), which can often feel like a really daunting task.

Charlie:

For example, when I do this exercise I am always connecting to my community telepathically from my sick bed. With that in mind, I have on my access rider that where possible I need to work remotely and for an organisation hosting any sort of creative or community event this can translate into thinking about how the event could be made hybrid, so that participants can also join remotely.

Jen: The exercise asks participants to think about how they access a space, how they communicate in the space, the sensory input, what makes them comfortable in the space, the things they might like to do, the energy the space requires and how they feel afterwards. If you are running a community space or hosting an in-person event you can use this exercise to think

imaginatively beyond and inclusive of the usual access tools and barriers.

Charlie:

For example, someone with sensory sensitivity may imagine a space with low sensory input; a quiet, scent-free space with low light. Can you replicate a space like this in your event? Perhaps make the event perfume-free and where possible have a quiet, low-light sensory break room.

Jen:

If you are hosting any sort of remote or in-person event, meeting or creative workshop consider making the space a [relaxed venue](#) and actively advertise that it will be a relaxed space. Relaxed spaces, such as [relaxed performances](#), allow people to be however they need to be in a space without fear of reproach for not following society's usual etiquette in those spaces. For remote events, this may look like people accessing the event from bed or eating during, having their cameras off or on and allowing people to leave for breaks or leave early.

Charlie:

For in-person events, knowing an event or venue is relaxed could encourage participation from neurodivergent people whose behaviour is often misunderstood and reproached in formal spaces.

If you know the participants beforehand, reach out and make space for them to offer their specific access requirements, and ask what will make you comfortable in the space.

Charlie: The grounded dreaming exercise is not just an invitation to dream, but it's an invitation to dream of accessible futures. I want to encourage anyone organising to educate themselves on and use the access tools that already exist, but also to invite the disabled communities to dream of other access tools and ways to remove barriers.

Charlie:

When I do this exercise and dream of my accessible utopia my key takeaways for allowing my sick bodymind to sustain community are flexibility, active consent and respecting my own and others' capacity. This can be translated into how I organise and communicate with friends, collaborators, colleagues and peers in multiple ways. But it's also demonstrated in how Resting Up Collective communicates and organises.

Jen: When we begin a new exchange or collaboration we aim to demonstrate from the outset that there is mutual flexibility and respect for each other's capacity by stating that we can reschedule meetings as many times as either of us needs to without judgement.

Charlie: When communicating via email some of us in the collective have automatic email responses or email endings with a disclaimer about needed flexibility and longer time to respond to emails due to our disability and/or illness. For example, mine says: 'As a sick and disabled person I run on Crip Time, so there may be a delay in my email responses unless the email is urgent' which I got from another disabled friend and adapted.

Jen: In RUC we have a system for communicating capacity in which someone will put an idea or a project into the group WhatsApp/email chain and if people would like to take part they respond with an emoji, we also allow people to step in and out with very little explanation needed, we accept that all of us will have times when we cannot communicate or take part in projects and we also offer care, support and a radical acceptance. We do not ever wish to

replicate the feeling many of us have experienced before of feeling like a failure because of our illnesses.

Question 3

Charlie: Intersectional thinking is essential to our culture of care in Resting Up, Jen can you explain how disability justice is a gateway to intersectional thinking?

Jen: We [agree with Patty Berne](#), a disabled activist and co-Founder of SINS Invalid that using the disability justice framework “calls attention to the ways that ableism is linked to multiple other systems of oppression.”

Jen: While disability justice, as the name suggests, centres disability in its approach, it is not a single positionality. To quote Berne again, this movement aims to centre “disabled people of colour, immigrants with disabilities, queers with disabilities, trans and gender non-conforming people with disabilities, people with disabilities who are houseless, people with disabilities who are incarcerated, people with disabilities who have had their ancestral lands stolen, amongst others.”

Charlie: In listening and learning from people’s lived experiences from different positionalities, the disability justice movement encourages us to trace interlinking oppressions. Everyone will approach disability justice from their specific experience, but – as we mentioned – hierarchies still exist within minority groups, particularly with white disabled creators and activists receiving more coverage than others.

Jen: Or illness memoirs or exhibitions predominantly being commissioned from white practitioners, for example. While actively choosing to broaden the types of content you engage with, corporations like Instagram can shadowban certain creators or topics.

Charlie: We’ve also included a link to the plain text version of [SINS Invalid’s Disability Justice](#) at this point in the podcast script.

Question 4

Charlie: We will now discuss RUC's purpose, how it began and how the collective enacts a culture of care.

Jen: resting up was born out of being sick for a long time and feeling very isolated, particularly in lockdown. I felt ‘not sick enough’ to call myself disabled, so began researching disability groups, resources, texts, artists etc. I contacted a few people I knew who were active in the disability world and waited to see who got back. We went from there.

Charlie: We wanted to create a place for creative work by and for sick people in a ‘live’ way, to complement magazines and online resources on illness and disability. While we’ve spoken about some of the ways we make our events as care-oriented and as accessible as possible, we also govern ourselves in a similar way.

Jen: We have a flat structure where anyone can bring ideas to the table or pitch into projects depending on capacity. We try semi-regular text/voice note check-ins and make sure our meetings don't last more than an hour. For us, flexibility and an in-built slowness is key to our work. Working on this podcast was slowness in action, though this does rely on external people being flexible like Gaia was!

Charlie: Exactly. We had to move the recording dates back a few times, and the same with internal meetings. Due to our fluctuating capacity, for example, I wrote a first draft of the script, which Jen then edited. We then texted while we were working on it, over about two months.

Question 5

Jen: It's also important to acknowledge the challenges we experience creating and maintaining this culture of care in Resting Up Collective.

Charlie: One of the issues I experience with labour and productivity as a sick person that I think many of us in Resting Up experience is an internalised ableism and capitalist mindset in which labour contributions equal individual worth. Although we reject this notion wholeheartedly, individually many of us still feel unworthy because of how embedded this idea is in our society. I often bring this feeling into my labour for the collective, feeling guilty when I do not have capacity to contribute, as I think many of us do. As part of our culture of care, we must find ways to counteract the productivity mindset and guilt it brings for ourselves and our members.

Jen: From the practical perspective of setting up and running resting up, I was and am very keen not to replicate hierarchical structures of organisations. Our flexibility and slowness are our main strengths but could be perceived as a weakness in that it can be hard to work when we're all sick and tired without prioritising paid work in addition to work outside the collective. Accountability is something I think about a lot, and in meetings since 2021 I always call for suggestions to do things differently if current collaboration isn't working. Things like switching to email, colouring documents with different backgrounds for easier reading, and prioritising opportunities in spaces that align with our values have come out of that.

Charlie: Although we recognise our need to make money to survive, one of the important things that has come out of resting up and contributes to our culture of care is that we talk about our relationship to internalised capitalism more frequently. We're constantly coming up against the idea I mentioned about progress and a 'strong' work ethic that many people live by. And railing against that is a tension we continue to navigate collectively and as individuals. And I hope, as a collective, we validate each other's worth in a way that is completely separate from capital and productivity.

Jen: I recently read this Jean Baudrillard quote: "In a system where life is ruled by value and utility, death becomes a useless luxury, and the only alternative" and I am thinking about how the government (particularly under austerity and the pandemic) codes certain bodies as invaluable due to their quote 'economic inactivity', which inherently discards disabled lives. Like,

we live in a country which - for all its purported privileges - has seen [330.000 deaths linked to austerity](#). The last thing we want to do in our group or with those we work with is reproduce these unrelenting structures.

Charlie: Which is why we encourage slowness in all our output as a collective. This might be disorientating for organisations we work with who have more usual schedules, but flexibility and slow working is an access requirement for the collective to function with a culture of care. Our individual and collective capacity must be accepted in good faith, to use terminology from one of your previous podcast episodes where Gaia interviewed Nick Cherryman. We really connected with the discussion of the good faith agreement both as a tool to create safe spaces, which allows for error and learning, as well as a tool for setting boundaries and accepting each other's boundaries and capacity.

Conclusion

Jen: At the end of every podcast Gaia asks the participants for what would like people to take away from their approach to the culture of care, so Charlie can you summarise our key takeaways:

Charlie:

1. Labour contributions do not equal individual worth, especially in activist and creative collectives.
2. Flexibility and slowness are legitimate access requirements that can and should be embedded into organisations and paid work.
3. Grounded dreaming can be used as both a tool to explore access requirements and an invitation to rest.
4. Rest is vital and should not be considered a privilege.

Jen:

Thank you for listening and you can follow resting up on our [Substack](#) or [Instagram](#) @restingupcollective_