

CLIMATE PILGRIMS WALK 135 MILES TO BRING CAMINO TO COP FILM TO BRISTOL FOR ITS PREMIERE ON TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 26

"Can one footprint imprint on our collective consciousness and create change? A walk, a pilgrimage, an odyssey ... for the planet. Five hundred miles from London to Glasgow for Cop26. Eight weeks, 56 days and more than 56 halls and churches. More than a thousand walkers and 30 rolls of 16mm celluloid film."

A group of climate pilgrims who walked 500 miles from London and Bristol to Glasgow for Cop26 last autumn are setting out again on a 135-mile route from London to Bristol for the world premiere of the film **OF WALKING ON THIN ICE (CAMINO TO COP)** by artist and filmmaker Benjamin Wigley, at the **ENCOUNTERS FILM FESTIVAL ON TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 27**.

The **Camino to COP26** was a people's walk carrying a message of love, hope, grief, fear, and connection with the natural world to leaders deciding on the future of our climate. Ben walked with the group, who became known as '**Caministas**', filming their experiences and capturing the sense of pilgrimage on this emotional and purposeful journey. More than a thousand walkers, aged from eight to 80 plus, joined the Camino for a few hours, a day or more, with a core group of about 30 completing the entire route to Glasgow.

It was a journey across the varied landscape of England and Scotland in this time of climate crisis: through major cities, small towns and villages, over motorways, alongside waterways, across housing estates, into fields, woodlands and up steep hills. Completing the 500-mile journey involved intense physical and mental effort, emotional and spiritual upheaval, but it brought transformation and a sense of hope to the Caministas, despite the looming threat of climate breakdown.

Ben walked with the pilgrims; rigging himself with binaural microphones (putting microphones in his ears) and shooting on 16mm film on his hand-crank Bolex camera, which he then developed, by hand, in his lab. **OF WALKING ON THIN ICE** is an immersive and poetic film memory of the Camino, capturing beautiful black and white footage of landscapes, the slow and quick movements of flag-waving pilgrims, and the ethereal sound of unseen voices sharing reflections as they walk.

The impressionistic film moments are captured in an iterative and incisive way; inspired by the words of Werner Herzog in his book 'Of Walking In Ice'. Herzog describes the physical act of walking as "**dreaming on foot**" - and a tangible sense of this that is present in the walkers' hopes, imaginings, stories, and connection with nature merging to create a new world.

Locations and communities continuously change as viewers journey with the pilgrims. From London where the walkers share stories of why they are starting on this journey, through Milton Keynes where we hear their feelings about the climate emergency, along with the voices of local schoolchildren. Struggling together through the heavy rain in Manchester, revealing their deep connection as a community on the route from Carlisle to Scotland, and uniting with pilgrims from across the world as we join them on a final jubilant walk into Glasgow.

Ben recorded conversations with the walkers, and people who witnessed the walk - politicians, community leaders, and passers-by who are stunned by this unique pilgrimage. The closeness of the walkers, who must rely on each other each day, reveals how people will need to create a caring community to succeed in saving our planet.

Singing is heard throughout the film, spurring the walkers on and changing with the journey northwards to Glasgow. The film is shot in black and white celluloid until the final walk into the city, when the brightness and hope of the destination is revealed, like a dream, in Kodak colour celluloid, as we enter the COP26 'Zone', (a reference to Tarkovsky's film 'Stalker').

Now, some of the walkers featured in the film will be reliving their Camino experiences on a nine-day walk from London to Bristol in time for the Encounters screening. Setting off from **ST JAMES CHURCH IN PICCADILLY ON SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 18**, they will travel through Maidenhead, Reading, Newbury, Pewsey, Trowbridge, Keynsham and arrive at **COLLEGE GREEN IN BRISTOL AT 3PM ON MONDAY SEPTEMBER 26**.

Sleeping on the floors of churches, village halls, and community centres, the Caministas will once more bring the spirit of pilgrimage to communities along the route, sharing their stories and message of hope while enjoying the hospitality, food, and kind welcome of their hosts.

The walkers will hold Camino-themed workshops including storytelling, printing, flag making and drumming activities at some locations to raise awareness of the climate and ecological emergency. **The main workshops take place at St Stephen's Church in St Stephen's Street, Bristol, from 3pm-6pm on Monday September 26 and 5pm-8pm on Tuesday September 27.**

People are also invited to join the Caministas in walking any part of the route - and can join a WhatsApp group which will give regular updates on each morning's meeting place and the group's ongoing location. More information on how to join is available on **caminotocop.com**.

The unique outdoor screening takes place in the centre of Bristol, on the opening evening of the Encounters Festival, with scenes projected onto buildings and natural structures and the audience walking through the cityscape in between the acts. The event, which starts at 8pm, is free and will be accessible and open to all. More information is available on the **Encounters website**.

Future screenings are being planned in towns and villages touched by the Camino, as well as major film festivals and environmental events. The aim of the project is to raise awareness of the climate emergency, allowing people to share their thoughts and feelings, and bring some of the hopeful, sacred spirit of the Camino to local communities as the film begins its distribution journey by foot.

The vision of the Camino to COP states:

"We are united by our faith; a faith that we can advocate and influence and be the change that we want for our world. We choose to walk as a practice of that faith, an act of connection with the earth on which we walk and the people with whom we walk and the communities through which we pass; and we make our way in kinship with the peoples and creatures of the earth who are suffering and displaced by climate and ecological breakdown. We do so peacefully and lawfully, ready to engage and learn, because we care and we have hope."

“My work is often about humanity’s relationship with the Earth, which is how I came upon this project,” said Ben. “As an artist I work in collaboration with subjects, and the XR walking community is no exception.

“I discussed ideas with the pilgrims individually or in small groups, and we would explore those ideas through recorded conversation, through soundscape, and through image making. We were all active participants in our collaboration, working together to make this film.”

NOTES:

* The trailer for the film can be viewed here **OF WALKING ON THIN ICE: CAMINO TO COP** and there is a **short clip for social media** which is also **downloadable here**.

* Ben Wigley founded Artdocs in 2010 and its first independent film, **P.S. Your Mystery Sender**, played internationally (SXSW, HotDocs, Palm Springs). In 2012 Anna Griffin joined the company to produce their first feature length documentary, **Paa Joe & The Lion** (Sheffield Doc/Fest and SXSW, 2017). Ben has a track record of ground-breaking creative collaborations with Arts Council England and The National Trust and with these partners completed an epic project that exhibited at Somerset House, entitled **One and All** - merging physical exhibition, online interactive journey and celluloid film.

* Most recently, Ben has created a bold new multidisciplinary, multimodal art and film project, called **Hart of the Wood**, that celebrates humanity’s ingrained relationship with the woods. The project envelops an ambitious range of art forms that include: a long-form avant-garde documentary film, outdoor expanded cinema live event, kinoscope hand-crank celluloid film projection sculptures, and an exhibition of handmade celluloid film prints, paintings, and projections.

* Ben is interested in how many different ways, or forms, a person can experience an idea or a story: using performance, documentary and experimental film, sculpture, photography, exhibition spaces, digital immersive experiences, through artist walks and interpretation, that all work together to build an augmented viewer experience.

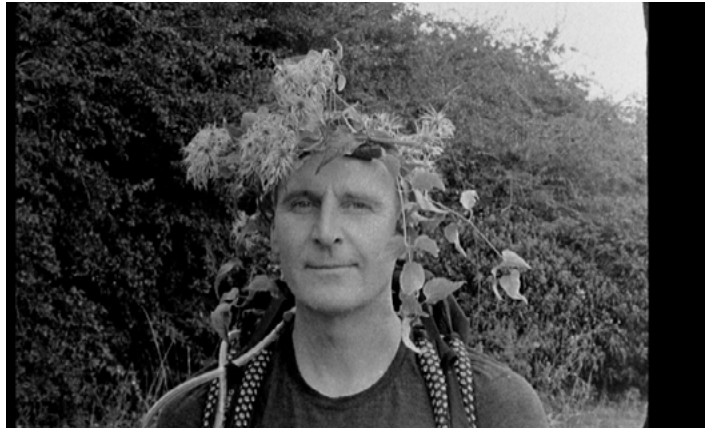
“These works are an extension of my exploration of the cinematic form. Bringing film into the landscape and building an expanded cinema experience that has the opportunity for the art explorer to get a sense of both a physical, and an experiential journey; interacting, immersing and participating,” he explains.

DOWNLOADABLE IMAGES FOR MEDIA AND PUBLICITY USE ARE AVAILABLE ON THIS LINK:
OF WALKING ON THIN ICE IMAGES

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