Omar Afif / Caravanserai / 2016
Project Report
PROJECT REPORT

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1. Introduction

Omar Afif joined Deveron Arts for a 6 month part-time residency in February 2016 to develop his project Caravanserai. This aimed to explore ideas around hospitality, mobility and exchange, through the perspective of a Moroccan chef, musician and craftsman who had relocated to Aberdeenshire. The project investigated culture through an individual in a local setting as well as drawing on the global debate surrounding public perception of migrants, refugees and freedom of movement.

By bringing people together through combining food and music, Caravanserai focused on building relationships, sharing skills and culture. Omar worked with various groups to develop this including: the Recovery Café, a cooking group in the Linden Centre; Syrian new Scots, recently resettled in Aberdeenshire; and pupils from The Gordon Schools; pupils from Gordon Primary School. He also delivered pop-ups and classes in the wider community, and complimented Deveron Arts’ programme by catering a number of other events.

The major outcome of this project was the launch of Omar’s music, food and cultural enterprise. This focuses on delivering workshops, catering events, music performances and collaborations, as well as a combination of all of these skills. Throughout the residency his branding, business cards and website were developed to establish his business identity and to continue to be a resource.
after his project. The project concluded with a series of events that launched Omar's business, this included: the launch of his website omarafif.co.uk; his stall at Huntly Hairst; and Caravanserai Night, an evening of north African food, dancing and music on 30 September. This brought together all the elements of his project and demonstrated his ambition and the potential for his business.

2. The Artist

Omar Afif is a multi-talented artist originally from Essaouira, on the Moroccan Atlantic coast, who has been based in Banff, Aberdeenshire for the past 9 years. As a craftsman, chef and musician, Omar’s practice reflects upon his culture and the traditional skills he learned growing up, as well as challenging these traditions by creating fusions that pull together numerous other styles, both in food and music.

Exchange is a significant part of his practice, whether this is sharing his knowledge, skills or culture, or in his hospitality that stems from his Moroccan roots. As a traditional Gnawa musician, Omar plays percussion such as drums, castanets and sings, as well as the Guembri, a three stringed bass like instrument tuned in the pentatonic scale. His practice combines Berber, Arabic an Islamic traditional song, dance and storytelling. In the past he has worked as a soloist and on many collaborations creating fusions between Gnawa music, Scottish folk and much more. This includes, performances and workshops for several Drum Camps across the UK; being part of the
Ha Orchestra, 2014, the first African Orchestra in Scotland; and running an interactive workshop for *Africa in Motion’s* Children’s Day event.

Prior to Caravanserai, Omar had been involved in a number of Deveron Arts projects. In particular on Allysson Velezon’s project *Nordeste/North East – Ceilidhcatu*, 2012 which explored the cultural similarities and traditions of his home state of Pernambuco in the North East of Brazil with those of Huntly and the North East of Scotland. Allysson collaborated with several local musicians, including Omar, to create the CD *Ceilidhcatu - NordEste/NorthEast*.

More recently he collaborated with storyteller in residence Ben Macfadyen on his project *300 Years to Grow*, 2015-16, where he developed a musical accompaniment for the White Wood Story, which responded to Caroline Wendling’s *Oaks & Amity* project.

During his residency Omar continued to work as a chef part-time in a restaurant in White Hills, as well as pursuing other opportunities across his range of skills and interests.
3. The Project and Work

Context

Background
A caravanserai is a traditional roadside inn where travelers, and their camels, could rest and recover from the day's journey. They supported the flow of commerce, information and people across the network of trade routes covering Asia and North Africa into Europe, known as the Silk Road. These inns brought merchants together, creating a platform for cultural and economic exchange, trading: spices, cloths, food, music and more. This resonated with the themes in Omar's practice, creating a platform to investigate hospitality and exchange.

This project began in February 2016 when the refugee crisis became a prominent issue for Europe. This gathered momentum in the press, with the language being used to describe the Syrian refugees triggering a national debate. Initially being reported as migrants rather than refugees, an element of choice was suggested which did not reflect the movement of people fleeing a war zone. This project engaged with issues of migration, exploring cultural exchange as well as Omar's personal context, as an emigrant to the UK who has gained British Citizenship. This examined the perceptions of migrants on a local scale whilst in the context of the larger global dialogue. Omar Afif migrated from Morocco to Huntly in 2009 to be with his wife and new family.
The process of attaining a visa was very difficult and drawn out which resulted in Omar missing the birth of his first daughter. With perseverance and help from future in-laws, he eventually got his visa approved. Omar attributes this success to a letter written to Alex Salmond MP that put forward his case to enter Scotland.

Gnawa is a traditional music derived from ancient African Islamic rhythms; it combines ritual poetry with music and dance. It is performed in ritual ceremonies led by a Gnawa master where participants dance until they reach a trance like state. While there are several African counties where this is present it is particularly focused in Essaouira.

From growing up in Essaouira, Omar was exposed to a range of different traditional crafts. Learning from his grandmother, who first taught him to cook when only 2 years, he cites her as: “the first person to inspire me with food.” This influence continued with his parents. Spices were integrated into everyday and utilised for medicinal reasons. Omar also spent time developing his skills.

The Project: Caravanserai

“What I would love to do is exactly what I have been doing since I moved here with food and music. This is to encourage people’s interest in my culture, but also adding flavours of Scottish food and music to the mix.”
– Omar Afif, interview with Claudia Zeiske, Autumn Newsletter, 2016

Omar was invited to continue his exploration of food, music, craft and culture within the framework of Deveron Arts in February 2016. As a local artist from a different background to many of the artists we have worked with in the past (having not gone through formal arts education) this residency was a learning curve that focused on professional development.

This began as an undefined and fairly open project that sought to make his perspective and skills visible to the people of Huntly. At the February Farmers Market Omar started to explore how music
and food could be combined, this exploration continued throughout his project. He utilised the Seasonal Café to create a Moroccan hub, where people could play music and try some traditional Moroccan bakes and mint tea. This platform was also used to establish an aesthetic, with different textiles, such as carpets and tablecloths; these were used throughout his project.

This was followed by a more focused exploration of food, starting on a small scale in the office where Omar engaged in the wellbeing of the staff and ideas surrounding hospitality to bring the team together for lunch and snacks. To an outward approach, delivering cooking classes, catering public Deveron Arts events, and exploring school pupils’ relationship to food through a number of pizza pop-ups. (see education and outreach)

In the build up to the White Wood Forum and Gala, Omar engaged with music and craft by making drums and creating a group of local musicians to perform at the gala. He brought together singer Abigail Ashton, banjo player Neil Hankin, guitarist Kris Orskov and flutist Charlie Ashton; to develop a set of five songs that brought together Gnawa music, Scottish folk, bluegrass to name a few.

In order to create a practical and useable legacy for Omar, the focus of the project was redefined to bring food and music together more coherently by developing a business that embodies Omar’s practice.

The project continued with the emphasis on supporting and assisting Omar and to develop practical apparatus for the enterprise, in particular assistance with branding, presentation, publicity and marketing. Shadowcurator Intern Sophie Lindsey plaid a major part in this. This culminated in the launch of this business with the new website, a stall at Huntly Hairst and Caravanserai Night.

Events

**White Wood Forum**

**Fri 27 May, Stewarts Hall, Huntly**

The White Wood Forum was a symposium that focused on the ideas that surrounded artist Caroline Wendling’s White Wood, a wood planted just outside Huntly as a living monument to peace. This explored art, sustainability, peace and ecology; and included speakers such as, Caroline Wendling, Shelley Sacks, Robin McAlpine from Common Weals, Georges Thierrey Handja and Satish Kumar.

Omar created the lunch for the 96 delegates, this was designed as a packed lunch so people could take a break from being inside and explore the town. The lunch included:

Omar also had the opportunity to play his Guembri before the afternoon session resumed.
White Wood Gala
Sat 28 May, Bin Forest, Huntly
The White Wood Gala was a community day that celebrated the opening of the White Wood, just over a year after the planting. This was a day of walks, talks, music, performances, workshops, poetry, food and more. Omar was involved in many aspects of this day, having made 3 drums for the procession from the Square to the wood at 10am, accompanying Ben in the telling of the White Wood Story, delivering a musical walk (in Arabic) with Syrian new Scots, and performing music both solo and with White Wood band, from his collaboration with signer Abigail Ashton, banjo player Neil Hankin, guitarist Kris Orskov and flutist Charlie Ashton.

4. Main Event: Business Launch
The major outcome of this project was the launch of Omar’s music, food and cultural enterprise. This focuses on delivering workshops, catering events and music performances as well as a combination of all of these elements. Throughout his residency the branding, business cards and website were created to give him a practical legacy to continue his project. Public events were also utilised to build Omar’s reputation in the local area.

The launch of this business can be seen in three major outputs: the website, the stall at Huntly Hairst and Caravanserai Night

**Website**

It was identified that having a website as an online platform was a key asset that would help Omar to brand himself and develop his business. This would act as a central point for information, and is a quick and easy way to make himself known further afield. Omar worked with current Shadow Curator Intern Sophie Lindsey, who showed him how to edit and manage his site on the free website builder Wix. Together they selected the images and information that were most appropriate for promoting the business.

This was a way to bring all elements of Omar’s practice together, the site includes: a home page, music page, food page and book (see appendix). It includes background information about Omar, his experience of food and music, and a list of information on what he can offer for hire. This was created so that Omar can continue to use and update the site to best advertise himself.

omarafif.co.uk

It has since featured on the African in Motion [website](#) as well as utilised on business cards and labels.

**Huntly Hairst, 3 September 2016, Huntly Square**

The Huntly Hairst is the annual extended Farmers Market, which takes place to celebrate the harvest. This is a platform for promoting and showcasing local food production. It included stalls that do not normally appear in the monthly market alongside demonstrations by local producers and other food businesses. This was identified as a relevant platform to establish Omar’s business in the local area. With his website live and new business cards printed it gave the project momentum which could be taken
forward after his residency came to an end.

In the convention of Deveron Arts’ Seasonal Café, a seating area was formed alongside a live cooking demonstration. Omar made the traditional North African paste harissa, which used a combination of locally grown ingredients and more exotic spices. Ingredients such as: onions, garlic and tomatoes came from Glenview, the local vegetable producers, and courgettes/marrows were donated by Bob Donald from of Slow Food Aberdeen City & Shire. The stall also had offered ‘spice advice’ with jars of different spices including: cardamom, cayenne, cinnamon, cumin, ginger, black pepper, paprika, turmeric, caraway seeds, coriander, clove, fennel seeds and ras el hanut. Omar shared his knowledge, both medicinal and culinary to passers-by, this was assisted by a blackboard that listed some of the properties of the different spices.

The spices were mixed into bags and available to people by donation, as were the jars of harissa. The ingredients where displayed in baskets and dishes with Moroccan patterns, the stall was also decorated with signs, carpets and tablecloths. The business cards that contained the newly published website were on display and given out as a promotional tool and with each jar of harissa and spice mix. Traditional Moroccan bread, or Batbout was made for people to try the harissa. Preserved lemons and limes were demonstrated too.

Live music was also arranged. Omar performed with local musicians Rachael Ashton and Charlie Roy. The stall was also used to publicise Omar’s upcoming event Caravanserai Night.

**Caravanserai Night, 30 September 2016, Stewarts Hall Huntly**

Caravanserai Night was an evening that brought together all aspects explored throughout Caravanserai. It combined food and music with a concert and sit-down meal that showcased Moroccan and North African flavours alongside traditional Gnawa and contemporary music. Over 80 people came to Stewarts Hall, Huntly to experience this.

In order to create a level of ambience and intimacy in the hall the stage was not used, instead a central performance space was created with Moroccan carpets. Tables and chairs were positioned around this, with additional space in the middle for dancing. The tables were decorated with African cloth, wild flowers and candles; a selection of lamps were used to create low, ambient lighting.

Omar developed a programme of music for the night that incorporated numerous local musicians he had collaborated with throughout his project. This included: Rebecca Dunn, ukulele and singer; Joost Oud, guitarist; Miri Tamura, guitarist; Kris Orskov, guitarist; Claudia Van Zuiden, singer; John Mackie, poet; Alistair Thomson, saxophone; as well as a collaboration with Rachel Bride Ashton Band which included, Neil Hankin, Banjo; Rachel Ashton, guitar and singer; Charlie Roy, bass and Omar Afif.
This went alongside a menu of Moroccan delicacies made from local ingredients sourced from Glenview Local Produce and Forbes Raeburn Butchers. This included: Beetroot and toasted Sesame Seed Salad, Moroccan Lentil and Pumpkin Tajine, Batbout (traditional Moroccan bread), Moroccan Zaalouk with roasted Aubergine, Peppers and Tomatoes, Omar’s Meatballs and preserved Lemon Tajine, Celery Root and Apple Salad; plus sweets: Almond and Sesame Seed Briouat, White Chocolate and Coconut Truffles and Orange with Honey and Cinnamon.

The initial preparation for the food was completed by Omar the day before the event and he was assisted by 4 Syrian New Scot volunteers on the night. After the food was served, Omar collaborated with various musicians and groups, as well as delivering a solo performance.

Thank you so much for a delightful evening on Friday evening. The performances were such great fun and had such a great variety of different music. The food was absolutely delicious and beautifully presented. The ambience was so colourful and atmospheric too. It all felt like a cultural/artistic bridge between different cultures. I think that your creative input in Huntly is such a positive one, as people really seemed to enjoy what you facilitated on the evening, in collaboration with Deveron Arts. I cannot think of anything that could have been better for the evening to be more successful. With sincere thanks and every best wish,
Claudia van Zuiden

5. Marketing

Print and Digital

- 2 x 2000 printed newsletters (summer and autumn newsletter) that were distributed locally and posted to art organisations and universities within the UK.
- 100 printed Business Cards
- Flyers distributed for major events in Huntly
- Posters distributed for each event in Huntly
- The project was featured on Deveron Arts’ website, and advertised through our social media on Facebook, twitter. Instagram
- Labels were printed for chutney and sweet chilli sauce to be sold at Caravanserai Night, this included Omar’s web address and the ingredients
- Email shots were sent to advertise upcoming events and for updates on Omar’s project
6. Education / Outreach Programme

Artist Talks
- Friday Lunch Talk
- Talk at engage Scotland, Network Meeting

The Gordon Schools
As part of his project 300 Years to Grow, Ben and Omar collaborated on puppetry workshops. Omar worked on the musically accompaniment with drumming and singing workshops. These workshops were continued throughout Caravanserai, particularly in the build up to the White Wood Forum and Gala. Gnawa music was shared with children in the music department. They were taught songs through singing, drumming and dancing. The results of this were shown alongside the art and drama department in the performance of the White Wood Story in the wood on the 25 May 2016.

The Square
A pizza pop-up was organised for 3 weeks to make Omar's food visible in the town and to encourage the pupils from the Gordon Schools to eat healthier food in their lunch break. Homemade pizza aimed to be appealing but also more nutritious then the chips and fast food on offer.

Syrian New Scots / Garioch Community Centre, Inverurie
Omar, along with members of the Deveron Arts team visited the recently resettled Syrian new Scots at their regular meetings in Inverurie. The group consists of no. of Syrians who relocated in 2016. Here we presented the ideas behind the White Wood and invited them to the White Wood Gala, this was relayed through a translated. Omar shared his music with them, playing his Geumbri and singing, which encouraged them to dance and share their own traditional songs. This relationship continued throughout Caravanserai with volunteers from the group helping with cooking for various events including: White Wood Forum and Caravanserai Night.

This is the first time that I smiled since leaving Syria.
Bassel Aldayeh

Linden Centre
Two North African cooking courses were held for 3 weeks each in March and August 2016 in the community kitchen. These took place in the evening and gave participants the opportunity to learn traditional Moroccan recipes and flavours, including tajines, bread, lentils, preserved lemons, to name a few. Omar also participated as a guest chef for the local cooking group the Recovery Café, who meet every Friday lunch time.
Attendance Numbers
Groups and individuals that we worked with over the course of the project:

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<th>Caravanserai Events 2016</th>
<th>events</th>
<th>participants</th>
<th>Onlookers estimate</th>
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<td>100</td>
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<tr>
<td>Lunchtime Talk</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Moroccan Meals</td>
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<td>36</td>
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<tr>
<td>Living the Land ?</td>
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<td>52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Pizza Pop-up</td>
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<td>200</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Wood Forum</td>
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<td>96</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Wood Gala</td>
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<td>300</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Huntly Hairst</td>
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<td>70</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caravanserai Night</td>
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<td>80</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>16</strong></td>
<td><strong>889</strong></td>
<td><strong>400</strong></td>
</tr>
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7. Media

The project gained strong coverage in local press having several articles and featuring as picture of the week in the Huntly Express.

The project was featured in the following places:

**Press Coverage**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Press</th>
<th>Title</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>12/02/2016</td>
<td>Huntly Express</td>
<td>Picture of the week (farmers market)</td>
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<tr>
<td>13/05/2016</td>
<td>Huntly Express</td>
<td>Gala event set to launch White Wood</td>
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<tr>
<td>July/Aug 2016</td>
<td>Leopard Magazine</td>
<td>Celebrating the true value of trees</td>
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<tr>
<td>01/07/2016</td>
<td>Huntly Express</td>
<td>Moroccan shares a taste of home in Huntly</td>
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<td>09/09/2016</td>
<td>Huntly Express</td>
<td>African night on the menu</td>
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<td>09/09/2016</td>
<td>Huntly Express</td>
<td>It's Bun Voyage for market bakers as they bid farewell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(Huntly Hairst)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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8. Comments / Reflections / Evaluation

Reflection/Evaluation
While Deveron Arts has worked with Omar in the past, through other projects, and has a long relationship of working with local artists who have not necessarily gone through formal art school training, finding a way in which both different approaches could work together was initially challenging. This was the first time Deveron Arts worked with an artist from an ethnic diversity background and tools and apparatus such as the project page on the website and the conceptual framework usually developed to underpin projects were difficult to establish due to Omar’s practice as a family and self taught artist. Both Deveron Arts and the artist needed to reflect on their own approach and consider alternative modes in order to take the project forward.

This meant that the project initially lacked a clear focus, exploring music, food, culture and craft more independently rather than uniting them with the aim to launch a business. Through experimenting with different events such as the cooking classes and pizza-pop ups, the exploration of food initially took president. It was identified that as an artist who was used to practicing as a musician and as a paid chef it was beneficial to keep more of an openness and less formal structures than typical in Deveron Arts projects.

The events surrounding the White Wood, in May 2016, shifted the focus of the project, complimenting Omar’s recent collaboration with Ben on the White Wood Story. This brought in ideas of peace and pacifism to Caravanserai, whilst building on ideas surrounding freedom of movement and unity. It was beneficial for Omar to be able to focus his skills and craft around an event and existing artwork rather than developing his own conceptual framework for his project. It allowed him to work across all aspects of his diverse practice and pull together many ideas and aspirations for the events and Deveron Arts as a whole. By building his own drums and sharing out his instruments for the parade to the wood for the Gala, he brought the group together whilst creating a variety of instruments and musical styles, complimenting Steve Brown, local piper and forester, on the bagpipes. Thanks to the relationship he developed with the Syrian new Scots from Inverurie, they were invited and attended the gala. Omar was able to create an activity specifically for them to combat the language barrier, which was an obstacle in many of the other activities programmed. He devised a musical walk in Arabic, on the day this evolved into a celebration of music and dance; this perfectly captured the spirit of the day. Having the opportunity to engage with this new community through Deveron Arts’ current artist in residence and Arabic speaker, was an invaluable connection and outcome of the project. The White Wood Gala also inspired the creation of the White Wood Band, a collaboration with local musicians.

After reflecting on the mix of events and activities to date the project developed a more specific focus, to develop a business enterprise that combined cooking, music and craft. This was the most useful activity for the artists, as it would help to realise his ambition to leave his part-time restaurant job and focus entirely on his varied creative practices. This came out of all the different activities, discussions and events that took place throughout Caravanserai, and reflects the benefits of having less structure when appropriate, responding to different artists approaches, needs and projects.
Given the initial lack of clarity and perspectives between both Deveron Arts and the artist, communication was a persistent issue. While the team was able to work well with Omar to a shared goal and the lack of structure was beneficial to the development of the project, developing more of a middle ground would have been beneficial to the working relationship and avoid confusion. This would have helped to ensure both the team and the artists were working effectively together throughout the duration of the project. In hindsight this could have been improved with more regular meetings about various events and process of the project, and with more actively enforcing arranged contact.

The development of the website and working towards the business launch at the Hairst and Caravanserai Night created a useful legacy and momentum for the end of the residency, which could be taken forward by Omar independently. Through the branding, development of the website and other aesthetic and practical touches, such as the labelling and presentation of the jars of produce and teaching website management, Caravanserai was able to help develop Omar’s practice and provide a strong foundation for taking his business forward.
9. Legacy

Omar’s Caravanserai newly created business is the main legacy of the project, this has been given a good foundation through the creation of the website, business cards and the connections and relationships formed throughout his residency. It is a wonderful outcome for an artist that has been self and family taught in a society of merchants.

Since Caravanserai, Omar has been able to cater for events such as engage Scotland’s Networking Meeting, 19 September 2016, at No. 11 Gordon Street, and Huntly District Development Trust’s (HDDT) AGM. He has also been invited to the Africa in Motion film festival to do music and other work since then: www.africa-in-motion.org.uk/programme/edinburgh/

With Deveron Arts taking more of a backseat in the events that launch his business he has been given an increased visibility in the town, which has helped to establish his reputation locally. This is something that can be taken forward and built on.

The work done with the Syrian new Scots has created a positive legacy with Deveron Arts, and has already led to other events such as the Huntly Meets Syria Ceilidh, and visits from other potential artists; including Syrian musician Maya Yuussuf. Having identified the success of working with an artist fluent in Arabic through Omar’s project, we have made this consideration in our future planning.

A Town Collection piece has not been discussed at the time of writing this report.
10. Funding and Thanks

**Artist**
Omar Afif

**Team**
Claudia Zeiske (Director)
Joss Allen (Project Manager)
Rachael Disbury (Local Programmer, Art and Community Worker)
Interns: Sophie Lindsey, You-Li, Dominic O’Donnel, Linda Bolsikova, Anna Reid

**Education**
Gordon Primary School
The Gordon Schools
Linden Centre

**Partners and Funders**
Creative Scotland
Aberdeenshire Council

**Photography & Design**
Ross Fraser Mclean
Sophie Lindsey

**Special thanks**
Ben Macfadyen
Syrian new Scots
White Wood Volunteers…
Neil Hankin
Kris Orskov
Charlie Ashton
Abigail Ashton
Rachel Ashton
Charlie Roy
Joost Oud
Miri Tamura
Claudia Van Zuiden
Rebecca Dunn
John Mackie
Alistair Thomson

**Report**
Sophie Lindsey

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Thank You to our generous funders for their financial support: Aberdeenshire Council, Creative Scotland. Additional funding has been achieved from a personal donation and income through the project.
Appendices

Appendix A – Website Text

Omar Afif
Caravanserai
2016

An exploration of hospitality, mobility and exchange Omar Afif is a musician, chef, boat builder and craftsman from Essaouira, on the Moroccan Atlantic coast. Now living in Aberdeenshire, he joined us for a six month residency at the beginning of 2016, to explore his diverse talents from the Gnawa tradition, within the Huntly community.

A caravanserai is a traditional roadside inn where travellers, and their camels, could rest and recover from the day's journey. They supported the flow of commerce, information and people across the network of trade routes covering Asia and North Africa into Europe. These inns brought traders together, creating a platform for cultural and economic exchange. At its smallest point, Morocco is only separated from Europe by 8 miles, over the Straight of Gibraltar. On a fine day you can easily see Africa from Europe and vice versa. Despite this, for many, the psychological distance between these continents is staggering. With this in mind, we are considering what it means to have a home; can home only exist in one place? What does it mean to be a nomad, a migrant or a settler today?

Caravanserai is fostering this culture of exchange by bringing people together through a programme of ‘pop-ups’ and structured activities –with or without a camel. Ranging from music making and teaching, cooking to instrument making and dancing to boatbuilding, Omar is revealing the value of sharing culture and practical skills that have been handed down over generations. With an emphasis on people and relationships, Caravanserai explores hospitality, mobility and exchange on both a local and global scale. By drawing on his personal experience of gaining UK citizenship, Omar is investigating what it means to be a migrant as an individual. This brings in issues such as peace, freedom of movement and the public perception of migrants.

Caravanserai aims to pave way for a cultural enterprise that focuses on cooking and the sharing of food; intercepted with other forms of craft and music.

Abou el Tayeb al Mutanabbi

اﺍمﻡ لﻝكريئﺉنﻥمﻡتﺕيﻱهﻩرﺭمﻡلﻝاﺍهﻩكﻙرﺭدﺩيﻱرﺭجﺝتﺕحﺡاﺍيﻱرﺭلﻝانﻥاﺍ

" السفسفن ييشي لا دبغي الرياح تجري يدركه العبر ييشي ما للكل م"
**Appendix B – Omar Afif in conversation with Claudia Zeiske**

_Claudia Zeiske:_ Hello Omar, you have been working with us on your project Caravanserai this year. This led to setting up your business bringing music, craft and cooking together. Tell us about where you come from and where you learned your skills.

_Omar Afif:_ Hi Claudia, I am from Essaouira: a small town in southern Morocco by the sea. This is where I learnt different skills like boat-building and music. I started cooking a lot earlier, when I was two years old, when I lived with my grandmother in the countryside. She was the first person to inspire me with food.

_CZ:_ How did a day with her go?

_OA:_ I remember she used to wake me early in the morning to pick figs from the prickly cactus tree. We cleaned and peeled them before she made her rghayef, a breakfast bread with tea. After that she went to milk the cows, which I would help her with. The rest of the day we would be getting water, fire wood and taking all the animals to feed and drink at the river.

_CZ:_ And what about the spices?

_OA:_ Spices in Morocco are part of everyday life and in every meal that she, my mum or dad, cooked. The main spice mix is Rass El Hanout which means the ‘head of the shop’. It combines cumin, pepper, ginger, smoked paprika, cinnamon, coriander cardamom, and whatever else you like.

_CZ:_ Where does the music come into this mix?

_OA:_ Music is in the culture and everyday life. Every afternoon when all the work is done, the family gathers for afternoon tea and cakes and play music, sing and dance together.

_CZ:_ Where does all this take place, and what are the cakes made of?

_OA:_ This took place at my grandmother Fatima’s house where all the family would meet and bring something with them. Cakes are made of almond and peanut paste with flour, sugar and butter. What I love most is homemade bread with argan oil and honey with mint tea. Oh and homemade buttermilk!

_CZ:_ Here in Europe, most people who become musicians learn their instrument by going to lessons, learning sheet music, and a lot of practice. If they are very good, they manage to go to a conservatoire or musical institution. Have you ever learned to read music? How does it work to become an accomplished Gnawa player?

_OA:_ It’s the same way in Morocco for modern instruments but for traditional instruments either you are part of a family that plays music or you learn with a master. In my case my family were all traditional Amazigh musicians who did it for their own love and not for money or profit. Later I moved back with my parents to Essaouira and Gnawa music came more into my life. Especially when my dad moved to a new area in the old Medina, the house was next to what we call Zwouiya sidi Billal, a place where Gnawa practice and ritual happen.

_CZ:_ And what about the craft? You built drums and boats - for whom?

_OA:_ My first job was with a local thuya wood craftsman. After that, my parents split up and I had to leave school and move to Asafi, four hours drive north of Essaouira. I started a whole new life with a family I had never met before and worked with their wool business.

About five years later, I moved back home because I missed living with my family and then my father - bless his soul - got a boat-building apprenticeship for me. Later I ended up working 1400km south of my home town building boats for some years. After that I worked a bit more with boats in Essaouira but the government stopped the whole industry which meant that I had to find something else. So I started working in a music shop repairing and making instruments and also playing more music.

_CZ:_ A real craftsman. Who were the boats for?
OA: Most of them were for fishermen, but also some people used them for migration and that’s one of the reasons the whole industry stopped. So many people every year travelled across western Sahara to get to Morocco, hoping they would find a way to reach Europe. And my boats were a hope for them. Remember, that the Straight of Gibraltar is only eight miles to Europe, less than looking from Aberdeenshire over to the Black Isle over the Moray Firth. At the same time I was running a guest house that belonged to a couple from England. Letting people in and cooking for them, but also doing the repairs and painting in the house.

CZ: You are such a polymath, Omar, what brought you to Scotland in the end? And what are you hoping to do now?

OA: It’s just the way things worked for me. I haven’t chosen it; I believe in destiny. The reason why I am in Scotland is another long story. I met Emma in my home town and she fell pregnant with our first daughter. So I decided to move here to be with my wife and my two beautiful girls Ameenah and Malika. What I would love to do is exactly what I have been doing since I moved here with food and music. This is to encourage people’s interest in my culture, but also adding flavours of Scottish food and music to the mix.

I want to make people aware that we are all the same and what affects people here or elsewhere impacts on all of us. My message is unity, we have to be one to be able to make things work better for every one of us.

CZ: That is so nice Omar. Is Aberdeenshire your home now? And what are your hopes and ambitions for the future?

OA: Yes, I feel home here more than anywhere else now. My ambition is to make my Caravansarai music-craft-food business that I have built up with Deveron Arts work. I also have an idea to invite people to join me for trips to Morocco for food, music, and lots of spice!

CZ: That sounds like a great extension to the business. We hope it all works out Omar. We wish you good luck and thank you for being with us, with all your spices, your tunes and your smiles.

OA: My honour Claudia, and thank you so much too for the support and great opportunity with Deveron Arts and the amazing folk. I love you all so much.
Appendix C – Caravanserai: Artist Reflection

My first project working with Deveron Arts was with children in schools, where I was teaching and performing music, it was a very interactive experience which showed off a lot of musical potential within many students.

Following this came what I will call the green march, a march for peace and free movement of people, globally whilst also in remembrance of war, and those affected by it. It was a chance for a new beginning; seeing this as a basic human right. I have lived a nomadic life since I was two, with new places, people, challenge and possibilities every time I moved. The march from Huntly Square to the White Wood with Steve Brown on bag pipe, marked the opening of the White Wood gala, which I took part in, creating a five piece band (the White Wood band) as well as collaborating with Ben MacFadyan on the White Wood story, combining the story with music to maximum effect, performing with Huntly secondary school at the White Wood Gala! The whole experience of the White Wood project was amazing, and truly did feel like a new beginning.

At the end of June, after all the great work for the White Wood I moved on to my project Caravanserai, a mobile catering project to start my business. Following a few events that I cooked for in collaboration with Deveron Arts and the farmers market, plus cooking classes at the Linden Centre which proved to be very successful. We also had great feedback from the Living the Land event with Creative Scotland and another opportunity with Engage Scotland.

At the end I hosted a Moroccan evening experience of food and music collaborations and launch of my business at the Stewarts hall in Huntly where I catered for over 80 people plus organised the music performances. I had great support from three Syrian New Scots and the Deveron Arts team who did great and amazing work in setting up the hall, which made it a proper Caravanserai experience. I am so grateful for the amazing opportunities with Deveron Arts and I am now ready to keep in my journey towards building my business and getting more work.

Thanks and kind regards.

Omar Afif, www.omarafif.co.uk

Appendix D – Business Card
Appendix E – Caravanserai Night menu

Caravanserai Night

an evening of North African food, dancing and music with Omar Afif

Fri 30 Sept, 7-10pm, Stewart’s Hall, Huntly

Menu

Beetroot and Toasted Sesame Seed Salad
Moroccan Lentil and Pumpkin Tagine
Batbout – traditional Moroccan bread
Moroccan Zaalouk with Roasted Eggplant, Peppers and Tomatoes
Omar’s Meatballs and Preserved Lemon Tajine
Celery Root & Apple Salad

Plus sweets:
Almond and Sesame Seed Briouat, White Chocolate and Coconut Truffles & Orange Honey and Cinnamon

Music

Rebecca Dunn, ukulele and singer
Joost Oud and Miri Tamura, guitarists
Kris Orskov, guitarist and Omar Afif with Claudia Van Zuiden, singer, and John Mackie, poet

Rachel Bride Ashton Band – a collaboration with Neil Hankin, banjo, Rachel Ashton, singer + guitarist, Charlie Roy, bass, and Omar Afif

Alastair Thomson, saxophone, Joost Oud, slide guitar and Omar Afif

Tickets: Early Bird £15 / Standard £20
omarafif.co.uk
Appendix F – Feedback from Caravanserai Night

Hi Omar,

Firstly, well done for getting such a great turn out at the event. The caravanserai idea was a great way to offer a snapshot of North African music and cuisine.

The food was delicious! There was a lovely selection of both meat and vegetarian dishes. (There is something very beautiful about the sharing of food in general isn’t there.)

I’m a big fan of Gnawa music so hearing the gembri was a treat. A beautiful North African ambience was created in the hall, with the tents, rugs and lamps.

My only suggestion would be to have perhaps provided more opportunity for everyone to dance. Maybe by inviting everybody to come up at the end to dance together

This might have also encouraged everyone to get to know each other more by getting out of their seats.

However, it was a fantastic night and hopefully there are more to come.

Many thanks,
Mela x

Hi Claudia just emailing u to say how I’m greatful to everything u and Deveron arts squad have done since my start of residency u are all amazing people and to have in my life is an honour for me also the event last night was amazing and everyone of my friends and other people said that they had such amazing time having yammy food and lovely music and poetry and today I got text about cooking for wedding that want only vegan food for the 5th of November which is amazing feeling thank u again and see u soon love u and kind regards
Omar

Hi Omar,
I thought the mix of food and music worked very well. An intro and warm up act, then the food and the way we went to be served table by table, all good. Food wonderful. The only changes I might make were that maybe having an instrumental act (like some of the jam sessions) rather than vocals while people are getting food as that might be fairer to the performers and give people a chance to chat more freely while queuing up. Charlie liked that the performers were not on the stage, but wondered if it could be less formal still, like having some of the musicians walking about? Or in the middle of a circle of tables? But I think that would present alot of problems with wires etc and obviously a drummer or keyboard player can’t walk about! I liked the stage set up, nice rugs/lighting, and the whole event was very aesthetically pleasing!
I did hear someone remark that they were a bit cold, (or in a draught) so I suppose, more heating or a slightly warmer venue? But you cant please everyone. And of course the sound issues! 😞. Sorry, you did ask! But was a lovely evening all in all, I thought!
Hope this helpful.
Rachel
Dear Omar

Thank you so much for a delightful evening on Friday evening. The performances were such great fun and had such a great variety of different music.

The food was absolutely delicious and beautifully presented. The ambience was so colourful and atmospheric too. It all felt like a cultural/artistic bridge between different cultures.

I think that your creative input in Huntly is such a positive one, as people really seemed to enjoy what you facilitated on the evening, in collaboration with Deveron Arts.

I cannot think of anything that could have been better for the evening to be more successful.

With sincere thanks and every best wish,

Claudia van Zuiden

Dear Claudia,

Congratulations on another good evening. What a transformation of the Stewarts Hall, it looked really mysterious and welcoming.

The food was as expected delicious, such a variety of fresh flavours.

Best wishes,

Pippy
Appendix G – Recipes from cooking classes

Almond Briouat

Serves 6

Ingredients:

- 500g almond
- 250g caster sugar
- 50g cinnamon
- 4 tbsp rose water
- 500g honey
- 50g toasted sesame seed
- 150g butter
- 500g filo pastry
- 1 egg yolk
- vegetable oil for frying

Notes:

Method:

1. Blanch and peel the almonds, then roast in the oven at 180 for 10 minutes. Leave to cool.

2. Using a food processor, grind half of the almonds together with the sugar, until they turn into a paste.

3. Put into a bowl and grind the remaining almonds together. Add cinnamon.

4. Combine the almond mixtures and add butter and rose water. Knead thoroughly.

5. Shape your paste into balls of equal sizes (approx. 4cm)

Folding the Briouat

6. Cut filo pastry into strips approx. 4cm wide.

7. Spread a little melted butter in the centre of your strip.

8. Place the almond filling near one end, and wrap up the bottom, to enclose.

9. To shape, fold the encased filling up in triangles, to the right and then the left, alternately until you reach the end.

10. Trim excess pastry, and dab with egg yolk to seal.

11. Fry the Briouat then soak in honey and drizzle with toasted sesame seeds to finish.
Batbout (Moroccan Bread)

Serves 5 People

Ingredients:
- 800g semolina
- 250g flour
- ½ tbsp. of dried yeast
- 3 tbsp caster sugar
- 2 tbsp butter
- pinch of salt
- warm water

Method:
12. Combine the yeast with warm water and sugar. Cover and leave for 10 minutes.

13. In a large bowl, add the flour, semolina and salt.

14. Mix together and add the yeast mixture and water.

15. Mix together, adding more warm water if necessary.

16. Knead the dough for about 10 minutes, or until it is elastic and sticky.

17. Cover and leave to rest for 30 minutes, or until the dough has doubled in size.

18. Divide into small balls and sprinkle with semolina.

19. Flatten each ball and leave to rest for another 20 minutes.

20. Preheat a frying pan and fry the Batbout for 2 minutes on each side and serve.
Chicken with preserved Lemons and Green Olives

Serves 5 - 6 People

Ingredients:

- whole chicken
  (other cuts of chicken can be used if preferred)
- 1kg red onions
- 1 parsley
- 2 whole preserved lemons
- 5 - 7 cloves of garlic
- 150g green olives
- 1 tsp ginger
- 1 tsp turmeric
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp smoked paprika
- salt
- ½ cup of olive oil
- ½ cup of water

Method:

21. Mix together the ginger, turmeric, black pepper, cumin seeds paprika and chopped garlic. Add a pinch of salt and splash olive oil.

22. Prepare the chicken. (Skin and cut if using a whole chicken.) Coat with your mixture and leave to marinate for 1 hour.  

For best results leave overnight

23. Put the olive oil in a pan on a medium heat. Once the oil is hot, place your chicken in and cook until brown.

24. Add the finely chopped onions and turn down the heat. Cook for another 15 minutes.

25. Turn the chicken over and add the preserved lemon slices and green olives, along with a half cup of water.

26. Bring to a simmer then lower the heat and cook for an additional 30 mins, or until the chicken is very tender.

27. Serve with homemade bread or couscous.
Moroccan Lentils

Serves 3 People

Ingredients:

- 250g lentils
- 1 large tomato
- 1 large onion
- 1 tbsp parsley
- 4 cloves garlic
- 3 green chillies
- 1 tsp ground black pepper
- 1 tsp ground turmeric
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 2 tsp sweet paprika
- olive oil
- pinch of salt

Method:

28. Put lentils in a bowl and cover with hot water. Leave for 15 minutes.

29. Grate tomato and onion.

30. In a pan pour half a cup of olive oil. Add finely chopped garlic, cook on a medium heat until it starts sizzling.

31. Add tomato and onion, cook for about 10 minutes.

32. Drain the lentils and rinse with cold water.

33. Add lentils and spices to the pan and cook for 5 minutes.

34. Cover mixture with warm water and cook for a further 20 minutes.

Be careful not to stir mixture with a spoon, mix by gently shaking the pan.

Notes:
Moroccan Preserved Lemons

**Ingredients:**

- 15 fresh lemons
- 1 ½ cups sea salt
- 1 tbsp green peppercorn
- 4 cardamom pods
- Juice of 3 lemons
- 2 cinnamon sticks
- 4 bay leaves

You will also need a 1 litre jar.

**Notes:**

*Preserved lemon can last at least a year and half if they are preserved correctly.*

*You can also use this recipe to preserved limes.*

**Method:**

35. Over a large bowl, wash, scrub and dry the lemons.

36. Cut a deep cross in each lemon, be careful not to cut all the way through. Fill generously with sea salt.

37. Pack the lemons as best you can into a 1 litre jar.

38. Add peppercorns, cardamom pods, cinnamon sticks, bay leaves and lemon juice to the bowl where you washed the lemons.

39. Poor mixture over the lemons and add warm water to cover, if needed. Then tightly close the lid.

40. The next day there may be room for more lemons. Make sure they are always covered in liquid.

41. Keep refrigerated and sealed.

42. The lemons should be ready in 6 weeks.
Rass el Hanout

Serves 5 - 6 People

Ingredients:

- 1 1/12 tsp black peppercorns
- 1 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp cumin seeds
- 1 tsp coriander seeds
- 1 cinnamon stick
- ½ tsp ground nutmeg
- ¼ tsp cardamom seeds
- ½ tsp smoked paprika
- 4 whole cloves
- ¼ tsp ground turmeric
- ¼ tsp sea salt
- ¼ ground all spice

Notes:

Background:

Rass el hanout, which translate literally as head of the shop, originated in the Meghribi villages of North Africa. It is a complex and distinctive mix of about 20 - 27 spice and herbs, the quantities of which vary according to the maker.

Specific quantities are a much guarded secret from one spice shop to the next, and blending is considered an art. Rass el hanout is used with poultry, meat, game, rice and couscous.

It can be found already mix in specialty stores, however this simple recipe can be used to make your own.

Method:

43. Grind all the ingredients together and keep in an air tight jar.

44. When cooking, add rass el hanout to a mixture of fresh chopped garlic, parsley or coriander and olive oil, to create a marinade.
Spicy Roast Veg

Serves 5 People

Ingredients:

- 1 aubergine
- 2 courgettes
- 1 red onion
- 1 butternut squash
- ½ tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground coriander
- ½ tsp chilli powder
- 1 tsp black pepper
- 2 tsp ground cumin
- ½ tsp sweet paprika
- 1 tsp cinnamon
- 1 tsp caster sugar
- olive oil

Notes:

Method:

45. Chop all the veg into bite-size chunks and place in a baking tray.

46. Add a good amount of olive oil and your spices.

You can change the amount of seasoning, depending on how spicy you want it.

47. Put in oven at 180°C and cook for 40 minutes.
Moroccan Stuffed Peppers

Serves 2 People

Ingredients:

- 85g couscous
- 2 tbsp raisins
- 50ml veg stock
- 1 tsp clear honey
- zest and juice of 1 lemon
- 2 garlic cloves
- handful parsley
- 150ml tub low-fat natural yogurt
- 2 tomatoes – roughly chopped
- 2 peppers
- 1 tsp olive oil

Method:

48. Pre heat the oven to 180oC.

49. Put couscous and raisins in a heat proof bowl.

50. Stir together the honey, lemon and stock, then pour over the couscous.

51. Cover and leave for 5 minutes.

52. Finely chop the lemon zest, garlic and parsley, and mix together.

53. Stir 1 tbsp of this mixture into the yogurt and set aside.

54. Stir the remaining mixture into the couscous with the tomatoes and some seasoning.

55. Cut the peppers in half and remove the core.

56. Spoon the couscous mixture into each pepper half and place in a roasting tin.

57. Drizzle with oil then bake for 40 minutes, until the peppers are tender.

58. Serve with yogurt and a simple green salad.