

SOUTHBANK CENTRE



Poems for
Our Planet

Pathways to Nature



National
Academy
for Social
Prescribing



Art by Post: Poems for Our Planet is delivered in partnership
with the National Academy for Social Prescribing



**Poems for
Our Planet**

Welcome to Art by Post: Poems for Our Planet. This is an opportunity to use creativity and nature to inspire you and support your wellbeing. Together, we took part in creative activities which invite us to connect with the living world around us, and explore opportunities to care better for our planet.

The Nature Connection Handbook, produced by the University of Derby, is a guide for increasing people's connection with nature. Research has shown getting closer to nature has a positive impact on people's happiness and wellbeing.

The five pathways to connecting with nature – by engaging, being in and relating to the environment – have been present in each of the Art by Post booklets. Take a moment to recognise the activities you have participated in. These help us to realise the positive impact nature can have on our health and wellbeing. In looking back at the previous five booklets, we have selected some of our favourite activities where we see links to one or more the five pathways shown below. To find out more, see *The Nature Connection Handbook* <http://bit.ly/NatureConnectionHandbook>

Five pathways to nature connection



1. Growing Together

Emotion

Noticing and welcoming the feelings nature inspires



2. Still Light

Senses

Exploring and experiencing nature through all the senses



3. Plant Life

Meaning

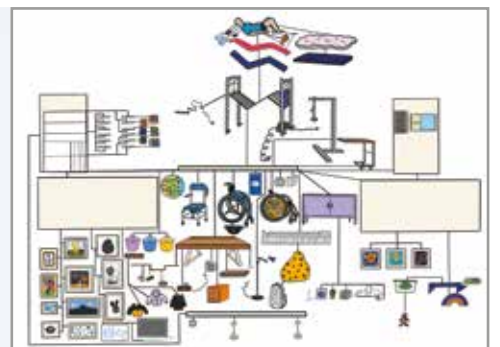
Celebrating and sharing nature's events and stories



4. Words on the Wind

Beauty

Seeking and appreciating the beauty of the natural world



5. Roots & Routes

Compassion

Helping and caring for nature

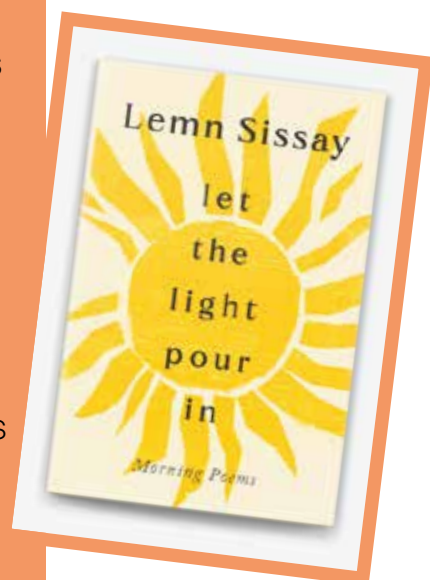
Foreword from Lemn



Hello. My name is Lemn. I am an author. I published my poems in a pamphlet 37 years ago and, goodness me, they are still being published. The first time I read poetry on stage at Southbank Centre was back in 1987. In the interim, poetry has taken me around the world, including to the Arctic with Cape Farewell on a 2008 expedition from Southbank Centre, where I was Poet in Residence from 2006 to 2012. We were a group of artists attached to a scientific voyage. The idea was that we consider climate change and create work. And now I am back to celebrate *Poems for Our Planet*.

Poetry gets to the heart of the matter – and by contributing to this project, you have joined a rich tradition which includes Samuel Taylor Coleridge, William Blake and Monique Roffey. The list is endless. The planet, in one way or another, has always been in the work of writers. My own favourite poem is ‘The Rime of the Ancient Mariner’, which is a tale of human ignorance towards nature and its higher power. I will let you seek it out.

In these booklets, poetry is a witness statement. Poetry is proof that you saw what you saw. Poetry is contemporaneous notes of the heart. Poetry is testament to the human spirit. Poetry is the burning beacon on the hilltop, no matter how wild the storm is. Poetry is the flare shot from the ship arching through a storm. Poetry is a sign in the wilderness that reads ‘THIS IS NOT WILDERNESS’.



Poetry is unafraid. Poetry is the heart of revolution, because revolution is at the heart of poetry. When something needs to be said, the poet whispers it to the wind. Or screams it through the window. When someone says, ‘It was too beautiful for words’, you can bet the poet is sat writing its beauty into existence. This is the nature of us at the foot of nature.

It is a wonder that Ackroyd & Harvey are creating an installation and growing grass with words from these poems. I love what they do. *Poems for Our Planet* is an inspiration. It works in the way wind carries pollen from the forest. Pollen spreads across land. Poems scatter seeds on open earth and new shoots swivel upwards, seeking the touch of light. Congratulations to the Art by Post community. Bravo!



About the artists

Ackroyd & Harvey are artist-activists who make artworks that reference memory and time, nature and culture. Plant material frequently features in their practice. Recent exhibitions were featured at the Tate Modern and, in 2019, the artists co-founded Culture Declares Emergency in response to climate change.



Growing a banner of grass from seed, Ackroyd & Harvey will take inspiration from participants' poems and select verses to be stencilled into the seedlings as they grow. When the stencils are removed, the grass denied light is revealed to be a bright yellow. Chlorophyll is an amazing pigment that gives plants their green colour. This helps plants create their own food through photosynthesis, converting carbon dioxide in the atmosphere to give the planet oxygen. The artists worked with scientists, who showed them how the structure of the chlorophyll molecule is almost identical to the red pigment in blood. This demonstrates the literal bond between humans and plants that happens at a molecular level.



Ackroyd & Harvey are exhibiting a *Poems for Our Planet* installation at the Southbank Centre, with words chosen from the poetry responses sent by participants. It can be found under the Riverside Terrace of the Royal Festival Hall (next door to Foyles) from 21 July – 10 August 2023, as part of the *Planet Summer* programme. A film screening, an audio soundscape and more poems are presented in the Clore Ballroom on 23 July 2023 at 3pm, as part of Poetry International.



Poems from participants & artwork

'Troutbridge'

By Clive

peaceful scene of my forefathers. a river under a hump-back bridge. sky-blue rolling water reflected. in the sky. by lush green rippled grass borders. smell of freshly mown. the half-moon reflected in the almost still half moving water. injected cortisone calm on the banks. a stealth effect of a painting. drip, drip, honeyed drip of the peaceful scene. the smell of tufts of clouds reflected in the sky/water. the peace and pacing of the chink of pink light. lighting my young half-dream of the village of troutbridged. etched into the calmness of my breathing.

'Untitled'

By Merel

Today, with my arms reaching to the sky,
I see the glowing sunrise in the early morning hour.

With my branches extended, I feel as if I
can almost touch the hazy horizon.

Rooted here, I sense the anticipation of
what might be.

Rooted here, I notice the quivering
energy of the world's gentle awakening.

WORDS ON THE WIND

FIONA

clean Air

For twenty years

I lived in a forest

The air was clean

The wind whished

The trees had beards.

£ Borrowing resin

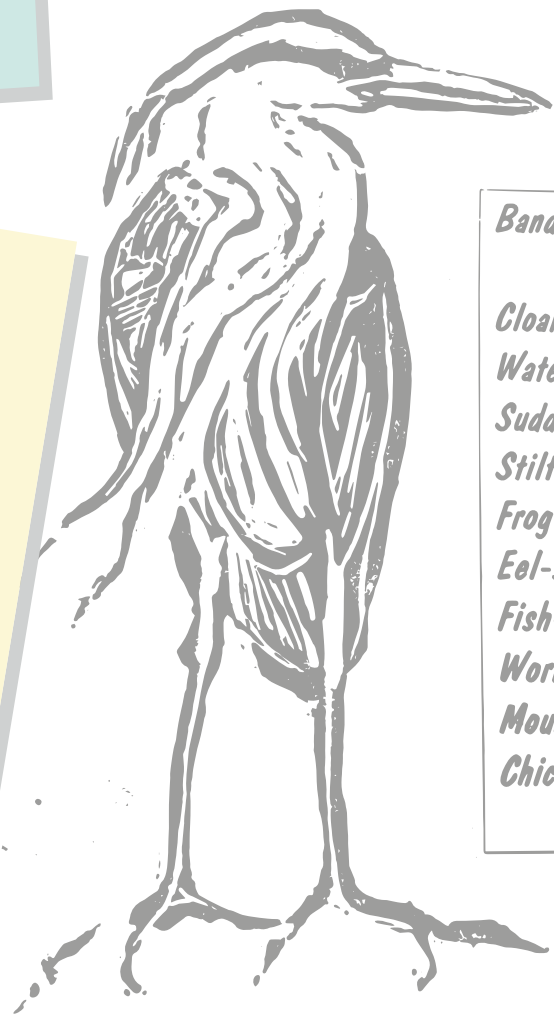
£ Borrowing beards;

Green fronds: grey green;

I stuck them to my face...

I went for a walk...

I was the Green Man



Bandit Bird

Cloak & Dagger

Water waiter

Sudden stabber

Stilt-stalker

Frog-Forker

Eel-splitter

Fish-slurper

Worm-whipper

Mouse-masher

Chick-slicker



'Haiku' by Kim

Sowed some seeds today
I hate soil under my nails
Soon flowers will bloom



We'd love to hear from you!

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre, and this summer we're presenting *Planet Summer*, a season of exhibitions, performances and events about our planet and climate change. We're including some *Poems for Our Planet* poetry sent to us by our participants as part of this festival. If you would like to send us poetry and artwork you've created through the activities in this booklet, you can email artbypost@southbankcentre.co.uk. We stop accepting artwork in early July, when the project ends. There is a final exhibition at the Southbank Centre as part of *Planet Summer* on 23 July 2023.

You can also use the yellow envelope provided, or address an envelope to **Freepost SOUTHBANK CENTRE**. Please write your name on the back.

No stamp needed



Freepost
SOUTHBANK CENTRE

If you can't send us your work by post or email, please arrange for somebody else to send your work to us, or you can tell us about your artwork by phone on **020 7960 4206**.

You're welcome to get in touch to let us know what you think of this booklet, ask questions, give feedback or opt out of the project at any time.

Contact us

By phone: **020 7960 4206**

By email: artbypost@southbankcentre.co.uk

By post: **Freepost SOUTHBANK CENTRE**

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