

SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Art
by
Post

Poems for
Our Planet



Growing Together



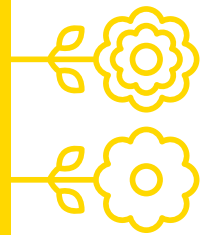
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Welcome to Art by Post: Poems for Our Planet. This is an opportunity to use creativity and nature to inspire you and support your wellbeing. Together, we'll take part in creative activities which invite us to connect with the living world around us,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

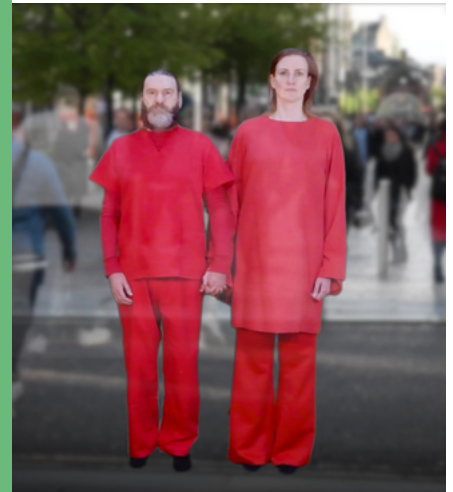


This booklet has been conceived by artists Bibo and Brian Keeley. It was created in collaboration with the Barn. This is an arts organisation in Aberdeenshire with a long track record of experimental work in arts and ecology.



'In the last few years, we created an environmentally-themed outdoor installation for the 2021 Edinburgh Climate Festival, and a short-film commission for the 2022 Scottish Mental Health Arts Festival. Our short film *The Shared Light* was selected for the XXXVI Pärnu International Documentary Film Festival in Estonia.

'Our creative practice is informed by themes such as the need for healing, allowing time and space for reflection, re-thinking and connecting. We would like to share some of our thinking with you.'



There are many ways to use art and creativity to deepen your interest in, care for and commitment to the places we live and to the planet. We're all part of nature and our future as humans depends on the natural world. Hopefully some of the following activities will inspire you to think about, explore and imaginatively enter into the living systems that connect us all.

1

Sharing a memory

Being around nature can make you feel good. Even if you can't get outdoors, memories can bring you joy. When Brian had sudden heart failure some years ago and was critically ill for months, he tried to stay positive by thinking about when he and Bibo used to walk on the beach near where they live. After a life-saving heart transplant, they were eventually able to enjoy those precious moments again.

Think of a time when you enjoyed being in a natural environment – a forest walk, a picnic in the park, or lying on a sunny beach. Close your eyes and remember the colours, sounds and smells of the nature around you. Where were you? How did it make you feel? Take us with you to that special time and place. Experiencing nature through all the senses is one of the pathways to nature connection.

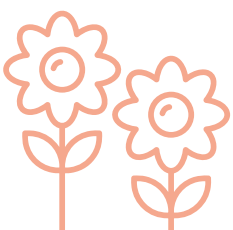


Getting closer to nature can help us to be happier and feel that our lives are more worthwhile, therefore improving our wellbeing. *The Nature Connection Handbook*, published by the University of Derby, identifies five pathways that can help us grow our connection to nature – we'll highlight some of these throughout this booklet.

2

Growing a poem

Make a list of up to 12 words which conjure up that scene in your memory that we just revisited. Now, take the first word on your list and let it grow out into a whole line, still including your word somewhere within the line. This will become the first line of your poem. Then, take your second word and turn that into the second line of your poem. Continue this process with all of the words on your list. Before you know it you will have finished your poem!





In Bibo's 2018 art project *The Wind In My Soul*, she created a series of meditative performances in remote parts of Scotland. The performances reflected on her relationship with nature, and the need for human and non-human healing. She used her Looking, Listening and Responding Device, immersing herself in the present moment to connect with and appreciate the natural world.

3

Earth's living skin

Soil is Earth's living skin. It is thin, fragile and irreplaceable. Without soil, there would be no life on our planet.

Soils are complex eco-systems containing organic matter, minerals, water, air and micro-organisms. There are more living organisms in one teaspoon of soil than there are humans on our planet.

Healthy soil is vital for all living beings. It provides food, filters water and reduces flooding. It removes carbon from the atmosphere and stores it in the ground, which plays an important role in the fight against climate change. Being close to soil is also believed to reduce anxiety and depression.

Haiku

Let's write a haiku poem expressing our gratitude for soil, as well as all the nature and life which depends on it.

Haiku is a form of traditional Japanese poetry which focuses on nature themes. In just a few carefully chosen words and phrases, a haiku evokes strong images to capture a mood. The poems can express things which we see, feel, smell, hear or touch.

A haiku has only three lines. Typically the first two lines describe two separate ideas, and the third line then connects these in a thought-provoking or surprising way. The first line has five syllables, the second has seven syllables and the third line has five syllables. The lines don't rhyme, and they don't even need to have any punctuation.



An example...

Twigs snap underfoot
The forest canopy breathes
enjoying the sky

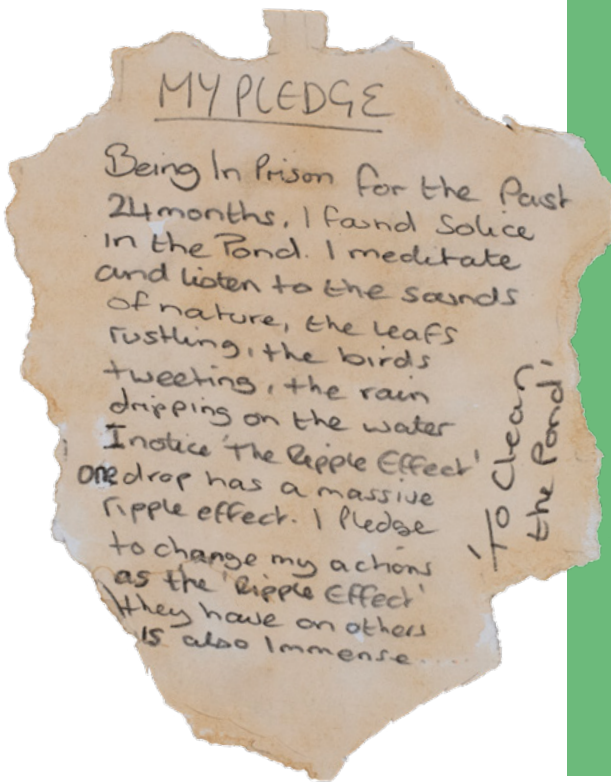
4

Compostable artworks

Soil provides food for all living things. But soil itself is also full of life. It needs to be fed and kept healthy for future generations. In this activity, you'll make some compostable artworks that feed the soil.

Take a page of your local newspaper or anything non-shiny you have lying about, e.g. a newsletter, a used envelope or even a page of your Art by Post booklet. Draw an outline of a large leaf shape on it. Cut it out.

Now you can stop and enjoy a nice cup of tea. Dab the used teabag onto your leaf or drip the leftovers from the pot onto it. Repeat this for a few days until your leaf has a nice stained effect all over, and then let it dry.



Pledge

Helping and caring for nature is one of the pathways to help us grow our nature connection. Think of something you might do to look after the environment. Pick something that is small and achievable. Choose a leaf and write down that pledge (it's best to use pencil in order not to add any non-compostable ink onto the paper).

Here are some suggestions from Bibo and Brian:

'I'll repair my jumper rather than buying a new one.'

'I'll buy food that has less packaging where possible.'

'I'll find out more about biodiversity.'

Saving our soil

- 24 billion tonnes of fertile soil is lost every year.
- 25% of the Earth's surface has already become degraded. This area could feed 1.5 billion people.
- Large areas of soil in the UK are considered to be degraded, a very serious concern for farming.
- The United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organisation says that we may only have about 60 years of harvests left – and then?

Simply noticing the good things in nature each day for a week brings sustained and clinically significant improvements in mental health. There is now a solid body of evidence that having a strong sense of connection to nature helps people feel good and function well. To find out more, see *The Nature Connection Handbook* (findingnature.org.uk)

We'd love to hear from you!

The Southbank Centre is the UK's largest arts centre and this summer we're presenting a season of events, performances and an exhibition about our planet and climate change. We'll be including some *Poems for Our Planet* poetry sent to us by our participants as part of this.

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, use the envelope provided or address an envelope to Freepost SOUTHBANK CENTRE. Please write your name on the back.



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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