

ARTSDROP #4

GUEST ARTIST: **Bibo & Brian Keeley**

TITLE: **Growing Together**



Bibo and Brian Keeley are an artist couple based in Aberdeen, Scotland. In 2013, Brian was seriously ill and received a heart transplant. This brought many changes and restrictions into their lives.

The art they make now focuses on themes such as the need for healing, allowing time and space for reflection, re-thinking and connecting. They work both individually and together across a number of art forms including sculpture, photography, performance and video.

During lockdown in 2020 they shielded together and spent a lot of time in the small garden of their city flat. This inspired them as they explored ways of becoming more connected with nature.

Learning links

English

Art and Design

Science

National Curriculum themes explored in these activities:

- 👍 Art & Design: Producing creative work, exploring and recording experiences
- 👍 English: Writing for different purposes
- 👍 Science: Recognising that environments can change and that this can sometimes pose dangers to living things

There are many ways to use art and creativity to think about how we care for the places that we live in. We are all part of nature and our future as humans depends on the natural world. We hope that the following activities will inspire you to explore and connect with our natural world.



Brian Keeley in his performance piece called *A Wind-up*. The gramophone is an old-fashioned music player that is very different from the digital technologies that we use more and more in our daily lives.



In Bibo's project *The Wind In My Soul*, she used her *Looking, Listening and Responding Device*, an artwork that she created, to allow herself time to connect with and appreciate the natural world.

1

The past: sharing a memory

Being around nature can make you feel good. Even when you are not outdoors, memories of being there can bring joy and a sense of wellbeing.

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? What made it special? How did it make you feel?

How could you share this memory with somebody else in the most descriptive way possible? Start by writing a list or drawing a picture. Then have a go at expanding your list into a short story, or turning your picture into a 3D model or collage made from recycled materials.

You could even create a performance of your memory, including music, sound effects, costume and props to create a multisensory snapshot. Try recording it on a digital device and showing it to somebody who is unable to get outside at the moment. This way, you can share your happy memories with them.

2

The present: performing an action

How might you show your gratitude for the things around you now that connect you to nature?

Take a piece of fruit, close your eyes and feel its texture and weight. Think about it growing from a seed. Or walk around a tree and observe it closely. Feel the texture of the bark. Perhaps you would like to do something bigger and bolder, like dancing in the open air!

If you are in school, you could work with your classmates to create an act of gratitude you perform daily (or with your family if you are at home). It could be as simple as collectively taking five deep breaths of fresh air in the playground and thinking about how vast and amazing our ever-changing skies are, before you return to the classroom or home for learning.

Experiment with what you are comfortable with. Maybe you would like to start with something small and then become more adventurous. What did it feel like? Try writing about your experience, or take a photograph or draw a picture of your action.



I found a twig on the ground. I held it in my hand and looked at it closely. I thought about how the whole tree that it came from had emerged from the soil – and that without soil I would not be here either. It made me feel quite humbled, but I also felt grateful.



3

The future: compostable artwork

Without soil, there would be no life on earth. It provides food for all living things. But soil itself is also full of life. Did you know that in one teaspoon of soil there are more living organisms than humans on Earth? The soil needs to be fed, and kept healthy for future generations.

Create Take a page from a newspaper or anything non-shiny you have available, e.g. previous worksheets ready to be recycled or artwork of your own that you want to re-purpose. Draw an outline of a large leaf shape on it. Cut it out. Paper will break down into a mulch when left outside in the soil, which in turn makes a tasty treat for soil dwellers such as earthworms. However, to supercharge your artwork with soil-friendly nutrients, you can dab cold used tea bags or other hot drink leftovers onto the paper too.

Pledge Think of something you might do to look after the environment. Pick something that is small and achievable.

Bibo and Brian's suggestions include:

- 'I'll repair my jumper rather than buying a new one.'
- 'I'll choose foods that have less packaging where possible.'
- 'I'll find out more about the trees around where I live.'

In school, you may decide on a pledge as a group, for example:

- 'We'll try to use both sides of any paper before it goes in the recycling bin'
- 'We'll remember to turn off any lights and chargers when we leave our classroom'

Write the pledge on the leaf you created. It's best to use pencil in order not to add any non-compostable ink onto the paper.

Commit Place your leaf onto an existing compost heap in your garden or on your school grounds. If this is not available, place it in your brown (garden) bin or food waste bin so it will be composted by the council. Think proudly about the step you are taking to care more deeply for our planet.

Here are some examples of different leaf shapes, to give a few ideas for shapes to cut out. You could use any shapes that you find in nature.



Thank you for taking part. You might want to share your work with your school, friends and family, or even our team at the Southbank Centre on social media: #ArtsDropSC @southbankcentre