

Art Encounters: Further inspiration

Three nature themed artworks from Leeds Sculpture Collection

**Medicine Wheel (1982-83) by Chris Drury**

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/medicine-wheel-295357/search/keyword:chris-drury--referrer:global-search>

'Medicine Wheel' consists of 365 different items collected daily over a whole year during a time when the artist was unhappy. The artwork includes objects such as feathers, bones, shells, foliage and wood. The idea of the medicine wheel can be traced back to Indigenous peoples in North America, especially the Plains Indians. Such medicine wheels are associated with spiritual ceremonies, have been used within healing activity, and illustrate ideas unique to the worldviews held within such communities.

Chris Drury thought that materials available in nature can show the underlying sense of a place and its connection to its peoples. He lets his artwork become an expression of the place.

The very place where you live has a language of its own. How could you define it, what do you think your town, or city, or village has that no one else does? Is there a famous tree, a loved park... a lot of noisy birds?

- For 2 minutes, list what makes your 'place' the way it is. What from the natural world can you find there? What is the land like? Is it hilly or flat, wet or dry, rocky or grassy?
- You may need to look and listen in a way you haven't done before - a place with lots of building and cars will still be full of nature. Is it the temperature, animals or vegetation? Natural environments are diverse: one area is not necessarily identical to another.

**Some Flowers (2002) by Brian Griffiths**

'Some Flowers' was made from pre-used plastic bags and Tupperware. The artist worked quickly and in the moment with plastic items that were brought to him by other people. The physical properties of the materials helped him decide what to do - scunch, wrap, tie, thread, make a flower and put it in a pot. Making an artwork by recycling things we use every day can help us think about what they are made from and their impact on the environment.

Sten Gustav Thulin was trying to decrease deforestation through paper bag usage when he came up with the idea of reusable plastic bags as a way of carrying things between places.

Everyone can help reduce climate change, everyone from all ages, young and old. The first step to helping is to realise your own relationship with the objects you use in your life and the activities you use them for.

- For 2 minutes, list the objects in your lifestyle that could increase climate change.
- Now find out about recycling and repurposing, and art made from ready-mades or found objects. Artworks made from carefully selected everyday materials can share and shape opinions about living sustainably.



Brian Griffiths, *Some Flowers* 2002

**The Sognefjord, Norway (c. 1885) by Adelstein Normann**

<https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/the-sognefjord-norway-37746/search/keyword:adelsteen-normann--referrer:global-search>

This painting is huge and takes up a lot of wall space. It pictures a place in Norway that can be visited today. Whilst many years have passed, a lot crosses time periods - huge rock cliffs, big sky and a large expanse of water making houses and boats seem very small. Imagination can take us there. Take a long, deep breath and step into the painting. Listen carefully, hear the seawater as it meets the land. Taste the salty air on your tongue. Reach out and pick up something from the grass, notice its texture and weight in your hand. Feel the atmosphere of the place.

Thinking about the places that we have been to - a friend's house, outdoors with trees and plants, a busy shopping centre - can provoke memories with linked feelings and sensations.

Artists have used their own memories to make artworks that will stimulate feelings and sensations within the people that experience them. Such responses can in turn provoke reflection about the things that are important and the kind of world we want to live in.

- For 2 minutes, list feelings and sensations in a place you value. Using this as a place to start making artworks can feel challenging. Thinking about the different feelings and sensations of materials will be helpful.
- Could you fill a space or a person experiencing your artwork with feelings and sensations through the art materials you choose? Hand roll-ups of tape could be sticky, a pile of blankets comforting, groups of sticks dangerous, a patch of blue paint inviting!

*For further inspiration, see this video exploring the Leeds Art Gallery exhibition, Natural Encounters, which features the artworks discussed.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LWSpQUTnV-4>