


# SOUTHBANK CENTRE

Art  by Post

## Growing Together



Philharmonia



HOME

arts depot



DULWICH  
PICTURE  
GALLERY



beacon  
arts centre



plat—form  
The arts centre at the heart of Glasgow's east end

nightingale hammerson







**Welcome to Art by Post. In these free booklets, artists guide you through poetry and visual arts activities inspired by our art collection and artistic programme. We hope taking part will spark your imagination, keep your mind active and help you stay connected to others. Details of how you can share your ideas and responses with us are at the back of the booklet.**

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.



We are Bibo and Brian Keeley, an artist couple based in Aberdeen.

In 2013 Brian was seriously ill and received a heart transplant. This brought many changes and restrictions into our lives, and had a huge influence on what we do as artists. Our art practice is now informed by themes such as the need for healing, allowing time and space for reflection, re-thinking and connecting.

We work both individually and collaboratively across a number of disciplines, including sculpture, photography, performance and video.

A series of Bibo's sculptures reflecting on the planetary emergency were exhibited at the Royal Scottish Academy New Contemporaries 2020. In 2019 Brian created a performance as part of a National Theatre of Scotland event where audiences listened to the live sound of his transplanted heart.

During the lockdown of 2020 we shielded together and spent a lot of time in the small garden of our city flat. This was a rich source of inspiration as we explored ways of becoming more connected with nature. We would like to share some of our thinking with you.



Brian Keeley performance photo *A Wind-Up* © Brian Keeley

Since Brian's illness, he has used his practice as an artist to explore themes relating to the preciousness of life. He examines life's rhythms and the awareness of the passing of time. In his performance piece *A Wind-up*, Brian's gramophone is a technical contraption which offers a strong contrast to the digital technologies that feature increasingly in our daily lives.

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

**1**

## **The past: 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 on intensive care, 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? What made it special? How did it make you feel? Take us with you to that time and place.

You could start by writing a list. If you want to, you could expand your list into a short story.



In Bibo's project *The Wind In My Soul*, she created a series of meditative performance actions 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.

## 2

### The present: sharing an action

Think about how nature makes you feel. How might you show your gratitude for the things around you which 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 your favourite tree and observe it closely. Feel the texture of the bark. Perhaps you would like to do something more bold and grand, like throwing open the curtains and dancing at sunrise!

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

### Soil life: a bustling community

Did you know that there are more living organisms in one teaspoon of soil than there are humans on Earth?

Even in winter, when the ground can seem rather bare, there is an abundance of life underground. These creatures munch through fallen leaves, and enrich the soil with essential nutrients. Most of them are so small we can't even see them.

Other animals who live in the soil are larger – like earthworms, beetles, mites and ants. Imagine you could look into their underground world. We invite you to draw or paint a picture which is filled with these wonderful creatures.

Use our guide to get started or create your own creatures.





# 4

## The future: compostable artworks

Without soil, there would be no life on earth. It 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 becomes brown all over, and then let it dry.

### Pledge

Think of something you might do to look after the environment. Pick something that is small and achievable. Choose a leaf and write 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.'

Don't worry if you don't drink tea. Every time you have a hot drink, drip the last few drops from your cup onto your leaf.

Send your tea-stained leaf artwork back to the Southbank Centre. Each artwork will be photographed, exhibited and then composted.

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.





- Soils are home to over a quarter of all living species on earth!
- 24 billion tonnes of fertile soil are lost every year.
- 25% of the earth's surface has already become degraded. This could feed 1.5 billion people.

- Large areas of soil in the UK are considered to be degraded, and this is 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?

Source: European Commission on the importance of soil biodiversity & Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, 2015

Here's a note from the Barn about sharing your creative work.



## We'd love to see your designs and hear your pledges.

Once the Southbank Centre reopens, an exhibition of all the Art by Post work will be created.

If you'd like to send our friends at the Southbank Centre a copy of what you've created so it can be included in the exhibition, please post your artwork in an envelope and address to Freepost SOUTHBANK CENTRE.



Make sure you write your name and address on the back. After they have photographed your work they will begin the composting process and will not be able to send your artwork back to you.

Or email your work to: [Learning@thebarnarts.co.uk](mailto:Learning@thebarnarts.co.uk)

By sending the Southbank Centre your artwork you agree to being included in their exhibition. **The deadline for exhibition submissions in response to this booklet is Monday 1 March 2021.**

If you are shielding (staying at home in order to keep yourself safe from the virus) please arrange for somebody else to post your work to the Southbank Centre, or give us a phone call.

**The Barn: 01330 825431**

Leave us a message and we will reply as soon as possible.



Supported using public funding by  
**ARTS COUNCIL  
ENGLAND**





