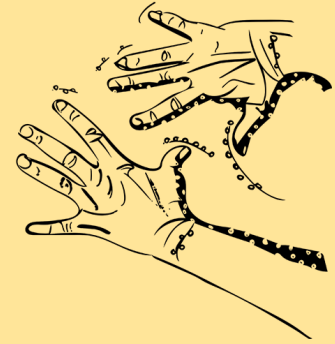




Nature: Sensory Exhibition Audio Description Transcript

Our exhibition, Nature Sensory, is based on the ground floor of The Art House in Wakefield in the learning space.

If you enter the exhibition from the stairs, you will be greeted by a panel explaining what the exhibition is about and to the right of the panel are four ceramic handling pieces by artist Jessie Davies, which you are welcome to pick up and feel the textures and the weight and the surfaces of.

Alternatively, for an accessible access, you can enter the space using the lift. As soon as you get out of the lift, you will be greeted by another work in front of you, again by artist Jessie Davies, called 'woodland, floor returning'.

The gallery has a large expansive plate glass window looking out onto the street. The floor of the gallery is made out of concrete.

If you walk forward to the windows, you will see Helen Thomas' work hanging. This work is called 'Seeing between the looking painting between the seeing'. We've placed it in front of the window so that the light interplays with the tracing paper. Helen painted this large layered piece on translucent paper in her studio, working both from memory and from photos and notes that she made on visits to Walton Colliery Nature Park.

The title of this piece, 'Seeing between the looking painting between the seeing', is taken from a note that Helen made in her sketchbook on 10th October 2024. The materials, colours, marks, and the translucent layered form of this painting are formed by the topography and the plants, visual perception, and diverse effects of light experience whilst working on-site.

The viewer's experience will differ according to a number of factors, including the time of day and the weather, or whether the light is passing through or bouncing off the surface. In making this piece, Helen also considered that there are so many ways of seeing and that people will view the painting from different eye levels.

If you walk right along the windows, you will bump into a work by Michelle Duxbury. This work is called 'can you hear the pretty birds sing'. There are three glass panels which are mounted on the wall, one above each other. They measure about 40 centimetres high by 40 centimetres wide. The glass has a smattering of soil residue across the back of each panel. On the front of each panel down the right hand side, there is black, waxy, handwritten text.

The text on the top says 'can you hear the pretty bird sing'. On the middle panel it says, 'do you feel the breeze caress your skin'. And on the bottom panel it says, 'breathe deep, smell the trees as they sway in the rain'. The work is situated next to a strip of LED light, and we are finding it interesting, as it is also close to the window, to watch the reflections and changing light qualities across the work.

The work is about Michelle's time when she was unable to leave the house on her own at the best of times due to her disabilities. These access issues were heightened during the project, as the artist was also experiencing issues with her wheelchair. 'can you hear the pretty birds sing' imagines a joyful and euphoric sensory connection to the green spaces of Wakefield she was unable to visit in person.

The body of work comprises three glass panels presented in the exhibition space, alongside an audio visual work, comprising a three part soundscape, and an artist film that may be displayed in another space. The soundscape includes recordings taken on sites in Wakefield by other nature sensory artists shared with the artist. The audio visual work is presented online intentionally with those who may be unable to attend the exhibition in person in mind.

To the right of Michelle's work, if you keep on walking, is a work by Sam Metz called Porosity. It is a yellow wax mallet, placed on a white plinth. The work describes Sam's interaction with the environment, and their experience of handling tools.

Heidegger describes tools as an extension of the body, and that you only really notice them when they break. But actually, Sam's disability means that any use of a tool is intentional because they dislocate their joints, so they are in constant interchange with their body and how they use tools.

So they were interested in connecting the mallet to the landscape, and this idea of it being fragile and an unexpected wax which has a warmth connected to the body, and how it might break very easily if it was actually used on the landscape, and this provided an interesting tension.

In front of this work is a second work from artist Helen Thomas. It's called Walton Colliery Nature Park, and it includes works in a sequence dated from 4th October to 20th November 2024. There are twelve small paintings, and you can read them from left to right almost like sentences of writing.

The surfaces of these small landscape format paintings are densely covered in delicate lines and overlapping brushstrokes that suggest wild plants and reflections on still water. The autumnal colours include many shades of green, flecks of pink, and patches of bright sky blue.

In October and November 2024, Helen visited Walton Colliery Nature Park where she made this series of small paintings. Wrapped up in many layers of warm clothing, Helen sat on a ground mat or camping stool to paint. Each visit she returned to the banks of a stretch of the Barnsley Canal. Helen wanted to create a series of sequences in these paintings. In addition to making paintings in the park, she also took lots of photographs and made sketches and day notes. Seeing between the looking, painting between the seeing.

To the right of this work, on a plinth, is another work by Sam Metz, called 'Ciliated Sense'. It is a bright vivid yellow in colour, and has wire sticking out of it. There's a shape almost of the section of a cylinder cut off at the top. And the wire creates an opportunity for vibration and sensory interaction. You're invited to touch this with your hands and to consider how the piece moves in response to the body. This invitation comes directly from Sam's interaction with the landscape in Wakefield parks, thinking about how grass moves as you walk through it or how it might be disturbed by the wind.

To the right of this work are a number of works by artist Amelia Baron. The work is called 'Shape of the Intangible' you can see tree root like structures made from re-twined jute rope twisted around two trees, the ends of the roots nearly touching each other. The roots in the image have been activated by light and emit light in a nearly pitch black woodland at night.

Beneath them you can see the actual structures that Amelia has made as well, twisting and turning. And if you follow the line on the floor beneath the work, you will see that Amelia has placed the roots into the crevice of the concrete floor. She invites you to use a small UV torch to activate the roots yourself. They start to climb up a pillar, sinking into the concrete floor and creating interesting shadows.

Baron explored the similarity between nature's networks, in particular, the mycorrhizal system and human social support networks. The mycorrhizal system, which is also known as the woods wide web, is the complex underground system formed between fungi and plant roots. Beneath the surface, this vital network shares nutrients, information, and support to enable nature to thrive and grow.

Baron likens this to human emotional support systems where friends, families, and peers offer empathy, encouragement, and reassurance. By creating luminous roots made from re-twined jute rope, the artist aims to visualise and nurture these important networks in an increasingly complex and interconnected world.

To the right of this work is a work by Jessie Davis called 'forest, regrowth from fire'. It's situated on a large wide white plinth. They're around 30 ceramic pieces, cylindrical in form, presented almost like a forest, each with different textures and surface details relating to trees.

The artist has used ochre in the glazes, which they have picked out with a spotlight. They are also interested in you just being able to see the ellipses or the tops of the ceramics, and have positioned the work considering the height of a wheelchair user or a seated body.

‘forest, regrowth from fire’ emerged over several visits to a woodland at the edge of Wakefield previously affected by wildfire. Davies documents unique tree barks, some showing charring from the fire, while others are covered with fresh growth, moss, and lichen. Each ceramic piece was wheel thrown by the artist and then shaped through carving, forming, and layering with various clays, including wild clay, mine ochre, oxides, and slips. The pieces are finished with glazes that use natural materials found in the area, like leaves, charcoal, and twigs.

To the right of this work is the work that we started with, a four piece painting again by the artist Jessie Davis. It's called In ‘woodland, floor returning’. The piece has strong blues, yellows, and oranges. And the four piece painting is displayed very closely together with no gaps in between. Davies explores subtle changes in a woodland stream during her site visits. Unable to walk or stand, she focuses on details that might go unnoticed from a standing perspective. Throughout her work, Davies explores the complexity and intensity of her autistic experience of nature.

We invite you to spend time in our exhibition, to activate some of the works. There will be symbols telling you which works you can touch and which that you can't.

Spend some time looking, listening, touching, invoking all of your sensories and considering the provocation of nature sensory.