

Ways Of Perceiving: Planned Exhibition

Lauren Stokes

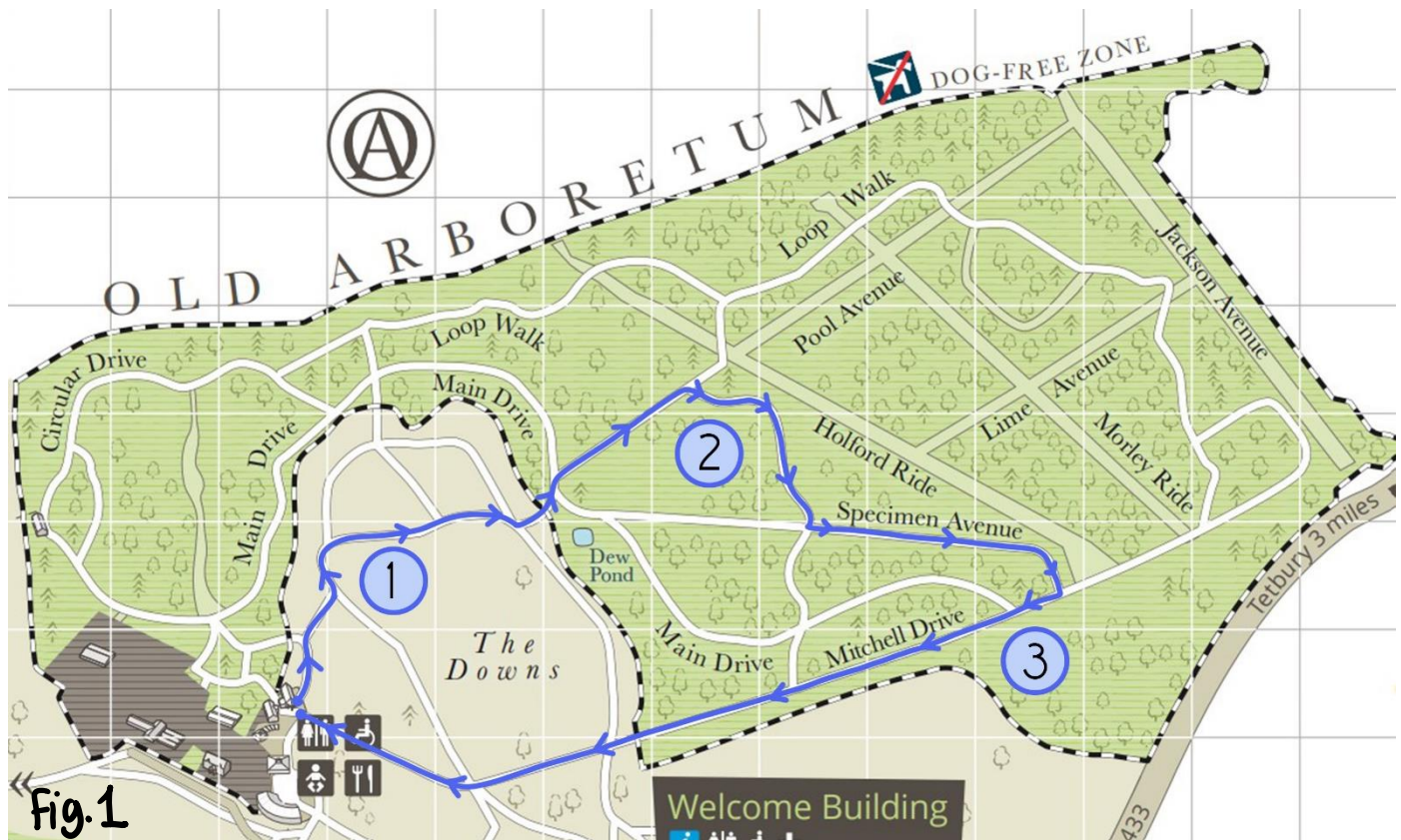
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Surface Pattern and Textiles

Word Count: 1431

Julia Lockheart

Connections



This exhibition explores humans' invisible connections to one another and how that can often be mirrored through nature's features. This is an important subject to discuss as, following the impacts of lockdown, everything has become very digital, and families have become spread further across the world. It is important to preserve these connections and go back to our natural roots through face-to-face communications. This exhibition explores Janet Cardiff's "The Forty Part Motet", and how a single voice can create an intimate connection; Ainsley Hillard's "to and fro", and its connections of cloth to the human body; and Angela Maddock's "Bloodline", which looks at preserving human connections through documentation. This piece also explores the threads and pathways theorised by Tim Ingold.

For my exhibition, I placed my pieces into the Westonbirt Arboretum. Westonbirt Arboretum is a large botanical collection based in the Cotswold in Wiltshire. It began in 1829 when the first plantings were recorded by Robert Holford, and after expanding the collection to surrounding areas, the arboretum was opened to the public in 1961.[1] The arboretum still plays a role in research and conservation of the botanical kingdom, while also having a focus on education and strengthening the community.[2] I am very fortunate to live 20 mins from



Fig.2

the arboretum, so as a child, I used to go there all the time with friends and family; this means I have lots of fond memories of fun times with family members that are no longer with us. I feel that places like this have such an impact on the bonds we create with each other as well as being a way to strengthen these bonds away from busy day to day life and technology. In his book, *The Life of Lines*, Tim Ingold theorises pathways and non-

artificial threads in the natural world.[3] The world is made up of so many pathways, roads, walkways and pavements, as well as invisible pathways such as the connections and paths we make with each other. Ingold states “the snail leaves an additive trace of slime, but animal tracks are usually reductive, caused by boring into wood or bark, imprinting in the soft surface of mud, sand or snow or, on harder ground, the wear and tear of many feet”[Ingold, T. p.41]. This explores how the physical impact of people and animals can affect the earth and pathways like those that make up the walkways of Westonbirt arboretum. Ingold also talks about all the connections that can be found in the natural world; he states, “an observant walk through the countryside will reveal any number of thread-like lines, although much of the linear order of nature is hidden underground in the form of roots, rhizomes and fungal mycelia [and] above ground plants sprout stems and shoots”[Ingold, T. p.43]. This mirrors how much of the biological makeup of humans is hidden, such as neurotransmitter pathways, blood vessels and strands of genetic makeup. It also mirrors the emotional connections that are formed and changed between our friends, family, and acquaintances. I feel that Tim Ingold links with the art pieces I have chosen as they explore these connections in a variety of different manners, with natural elements throughout. Another reason I chose to use the arboretum as my gallery space is because I feel art should not be confined to four clean white walls in an old historic building when art is such a form of freedom; as Hans Ulrich Obrist states, “the very idea of an exhibition that we live in a world with each other, in which it is possible to make arrangements, associations, connections, and wordless gestures”[Obrist, H, U. p.32] [4].



Fig. 3

“Bloodline” is a piece created by Angela Maddock and her mother, whereby they began to stitch two balls of blood red Scottish yarn together, starting with 12 stitches. Maddock began this piece due to the separation by distance from her mother; this provides “an incentive to meet” as well as a way to document their meetings and “a manifestation of [their] continued attachment”[6]. Whilst stitching, Maddock also dropped a stitch on her section of the piece. This piece is also ongoing, meaning that whilst Maddock and her mother may



move further apart, they will always have this “bloodline” to come back to. Because they chose to make this using knit, the stitches create a strong and reinforced connection that grows and gets stronger as they meet and add to it. Like how Tim Ingold explores the hidden threads of the natural world, they have given a physical presence to the strongest connection they have in their life, whilst also mimicking that of the invisible map of blood vessels running through their bodies. This piece fits into my exhibition, exploring “human connections mirrored in the natural world”, as Maddock’s work takes the genetical and biological she has with her mother and



Fig. 5

gave it a physical entity and presence. I would have this piece hung up in the trees of Westonbirt Arboretum, where it can have an organic pathway above the heads of the audience, but where light can also pass through the stitches. By hanging it, the audience can follow the different moments of connection that made to create the piece and see how it is still on going, this is, as Hans Ulrich Obrist states, “an encounter between the spectator and one work dominated”[Obrist, H,U. p. 29].

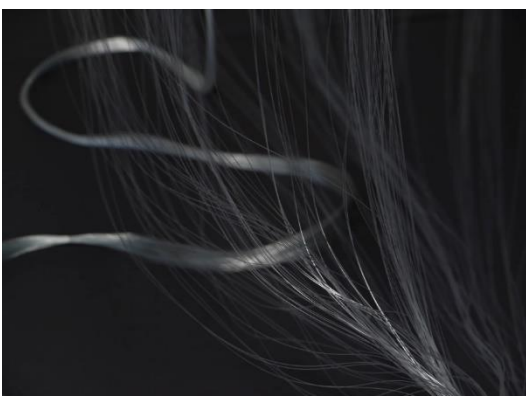
“The Forty Part Motet” is a reworking of a sixteenth-century choral composition, “Spem in Alium” by Thomas Tallis from 1556, by Janet Cardiff. When Cardiff heard this piece, she then wanted to hear the piece in its individual parts, so she used the Salisbury Cathedral Choir to create this. In total, this piece is 14mins long and plays on loop in the exhibition space. This piece is projected through 40 speakers, each speaker being a singer’s individual voice, that are placed in an even circle.[6] The audience can walk around this space to hear separate parts of the harmony or a combination of voices, or, if they were to stand in the centre of the space, the choral piece can be heard in unison. It creates an intimate connection between the audience and singer, despite them not being in the same room or even the same point in time. I would place this piece in the centre of Westonbirt Arboretum in amongst the trees as



this creates a more intimate connection between the viewer and the piece away from nature. Whilst when the piece is usually on display it is in an empty room with perfect acoustics, I want to juxtapose that by placing it into the forest where there will be other noise in the surrounding environment, such as birds, people walking and talking, and cars going by. I think by having these natural noises around mixing and blending with the piece, it creates a much now organic connection between the audience and the piece, as no connection is completely

the same and it will change as time goes on with different noises surfacing in the arboretum. I chose this piece fits into my exhibition as it explores how to create connections between different people, and in this case when the people aren’t in the same room or same point in time.

Fig. 8



“to and fro” is a textiles-based piece created by Ainsley Hillard. It was made using a hand-dyed monofilament warp, viscose weft and acrylic. Before being hand woven through the hand-dyed monofilament warp, photographic images are transferred on to the viscose weft, using a heat transfer process. Hillard says that this piece is a “physical and metaphorical construction of cloth and its relation to body, memory and spaces”.[7] These piece fits into my exhibition as it visually shows

the connection between two people without involving the audience or being created through that connection. In my exhibition, it will be hung in the trees of the Westonbirt Arboretum, overlooking part of The Downs on the property; this will allow light to pass through the piece create movement and bringing life to the figures on the fabric. By taking this piece outdoors



into a light and open environment, it changes the presence of the piece. In the photographed images, it gives a sense of falling apart and loss, however if you were to move it into a visually warmer space it can change that presence into connection and strength in that bond. As Hans Ulrich Obrist states, “its power comes from the subtle sources of juxtaposition and arrangement”[Obrist, H, U. p.32], and I feel by simply changing the source of light this can be achieved with this piece.

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Figure List:

Figure 1

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Figure 2

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Figure 3

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Figure 4

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Figure 5

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Figure 6

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Figure 7

Cardiff, Janet (2001). The Forty Part Motet (A reworking of “Spem in Alium,” by Thomas Tallis 1556). [online image]. Available from <https://www.moma.org/collection/works/87291#:~:text=The%20audio%20component%20of%20The,forty%20individual%20loudspeakers%20on%20tripods>. [Accessed 1st May 2024].

Figure 8

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Figure 9

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