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Ways of Perceiving

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The 'Back to Nature exhibition' which is being curated is a natural display of land art. It is hoped that the art displayed will be a gentle reminder of our connection with nature and our environment. As a nation it is evident that we all regularly become so disconnected with nature and at times do our best to destroy it, when really we should embrace and protect every inch of its beauty.

Land art emerged in America in the late sixties and it involves working with the landscape with natural elements. Art works emerged around this time as a way of condemning a lot of 'artificiality commercialised art' which was quite popular at this time. (Land Art | ArtHistory.net, 2020)



Figure 1

The 'collection' is to be displayed in the woodland and lakeside area of Hyde Park, London, opening on April 22nd which is National Earth Day and continuing through the summer months. Hyde park is not only one of the most iconic parks in London, it's a prime spot for the public whether they are sight seers, botanists or art critics. As Hans Ulrich Obrist quotes, 'to make a collection is to find, acquire, organise and store items whether in a room, a house, a library, a museum or a warehouse' (2014, p.38). So, considering this, the tranquil, beautiful land and lake at Hyde Park is a perfect choice for a nature themed exhibition.

The peaceful lake of the park reaches the edge of the woodland where some of the exhibits will be placed.

Many art exhibitions are set in quiet, echoey rooms which for some children and adults can be daunting and off putting. This outdoor exhibition is hopefully somewhere to relax and gain some insight into the beauty that is around us. Dr Strauss from the Harvard affiliated Cambridge Health Alliance says that 'having something pleasant to focus on like trees and greenery helps distract your mind from negative thinking, so your thoughts become less filled with worry' (Harvard Publishing, 2018). In our society the ability to relax is becoming a dying art and it is hoped that this collection will symbolise a need for the simple things in life and a need for change.

Tactile exhibits were an important addition to the exhibition as children especially love hands on activities. The educational program manager at Zimmer Childrens Museum says 'this unique exposure provides the foundation for creativity, critical thinking and connection to the world around them. (Arts.N 2020). A relaxed environment always makes a learning experience more enjoyable.

With the emphasis being on peace and tranquillity in nature, this exhibition will be curated to display the work of three artists which, after some research, were thought to be suited to the exhibition and what it was about. It is of great interest to observe the work of three very different artists create what their idea of connecting with nature is and how they encompass this.

As online curator Maria Popover says 'the art of curation isn't about the individual pieces of content, but about how these pieces fit together, what story they tell, by being placed next to each other and what statement the context they create makes about culture and the world at large' (Bhaskar, 2016, p.1658).

Careful thought and consideration were given to each piece making sure they were linked to the main theme and that each piece flowed onto the next.

The first exhibition piece would be by Nancy Holt. Nancy is an American sculpture and land artist and she will be installing her amazing contemporary 'Sun tunnels'.

These four enormous concrete tunnels which are eighteen feet by nine feet and are to be placed in an 'x' formation and will align with the rising and the setting

of the sun. Holt's work is based on vision, time and space and she uses the natural environment as not only her medium but also her subject. (Parafin Artists Nancy Holt 2020) The concrete tunnels all have small perforations in them which create the most amazing light formations inside them. The holes are made to represent the stars and so cast beautiful star constellations in the dark tunnels, connecting the viewer to our larger cosmos. It is envisaged that this will be used as a place of solitude and thought for many as well as an educational and magical experience for many of the younger visitors. 'It's as if you are walking on the stars' and this is just what Nancy Holt wants. She wants us to 'look more closely at our environment' and she 'has a strong desire to make people conscious of the cyclical time of the universe' (Holt 2020)

Although we cannot possibly expect people to get the same experience from these exhibits we hope a familiar message is portrayed. David Hockney mentions that 'different observers see different events at different times and we all see something a little different' (Hockney and Stangos, 1993) We all see and interpret things at such different times and levels but it is hoped that the same thoughts are built along the way.

A strong message hidden in a playful yet monumental piece of art work.



Figure 2

Following on from Nancy, the second exhibition piece would be installed by Richard Long. Richard is an English sculptor and land artist and uses natural materials whenever possible. (Richard Long | artnet, 2020)

Richard will install the 'Labyrinth' in the park. This will be identical to the one that he installed called 'Walking a Labyrinth' in the Modern Art Oxford in 1971 and is made of earth. It is an 'enormous rectilinear maze-like floor drawing and invites visitors to walk along its myriad of paths. 'There is a deep connection between land and the act of walking and Long is just one example' (Hamish Fulton - Seven Paces | Walking Artists, 2020).

Long uses very natural materials for his work including water, rocks and mud and so this piece will be a great choice in the park. Mazes or labyrinths create a wonderful and entertaining distraction using visual as well as body movements. The larger the maze the more visual perception skills are needed to scan and negotiate the whole area using mind and body. (Snow Maze Outdoor Kids Activity - The OT Toolbox, 2020)

Visitors walking the twisting paths concentrating on the narrow foot line can connect with the earth and environment around them. A time to be creative and be at one with nature as well as being a wonderfully tactile experience.

The Labyrinth links with the nature theme and although it is envisaged that many young people and families will use and admire this space, it is hoped that it will be a time, for others, to quiet the mind, slow down and take time out of a busy life. The Labyrinth which is the type of maze that Richard Long will create, is often described as a 'path of prayer, a walking meditation, a crucible of change, a watering hole for the spirit and a mirror of the soul. (Veriditas - New to the Labyrinth?, 2020). A gentle way to refocus.



Figure 3

Finally, the wonderful 'static twig' structure by Nature Sculpturer and land artist, Andy Goldsworthy, will be erected six feet into the Hyde Park lake and be roughly ten feet long by ten feet above water level. An eye-catching natural sculpture, Andy's work has an amazing connection with nature and he has a love of working with found objects which was important for this curation as it is of great interest to my own practice. Andy grew up working in Agriculture and this provided him with an 'acute awareness of his environment and a respect of the fleeting beauty of landscape' (Andy Goldsworthy | Artists | CASS Sculpture Foundation, 2020)

The twig sculpture will be an eye-catching natural sculpture and that, added to the beauty and sound of the lake will be mesmerising. Scientists believe the wave or ripple of water can affect the rhythm of the neuronal waves in our brain which cause a peaceful train of thought. (Brown, 2020) This will indeed add to the natural, meditational aspect of the exhibition.

The whole idea of this exhibition is to encourage visitors, whatever their ability or religion to unwind and have a moment of connection to nature and its calmness. We all have such busy lives and the hope is that the audience will get lost in this visualisation and experience.

Reaching out and seeing the beauty in nature is so important for our mental well-being. The Independent quotes that we should 'enjoy moments in themselves rather than as material for anecdote or one-up-manship. abandon the urge to capture everything on film.. tear up lists and lock the camera in the cupboard.' (How to really get back to nature, 2020) What great advice for us all. We are already realising, due to the Corona virus lock down, that life needs to change and occasionally slow down and hopefully we will all benefit from this down time.

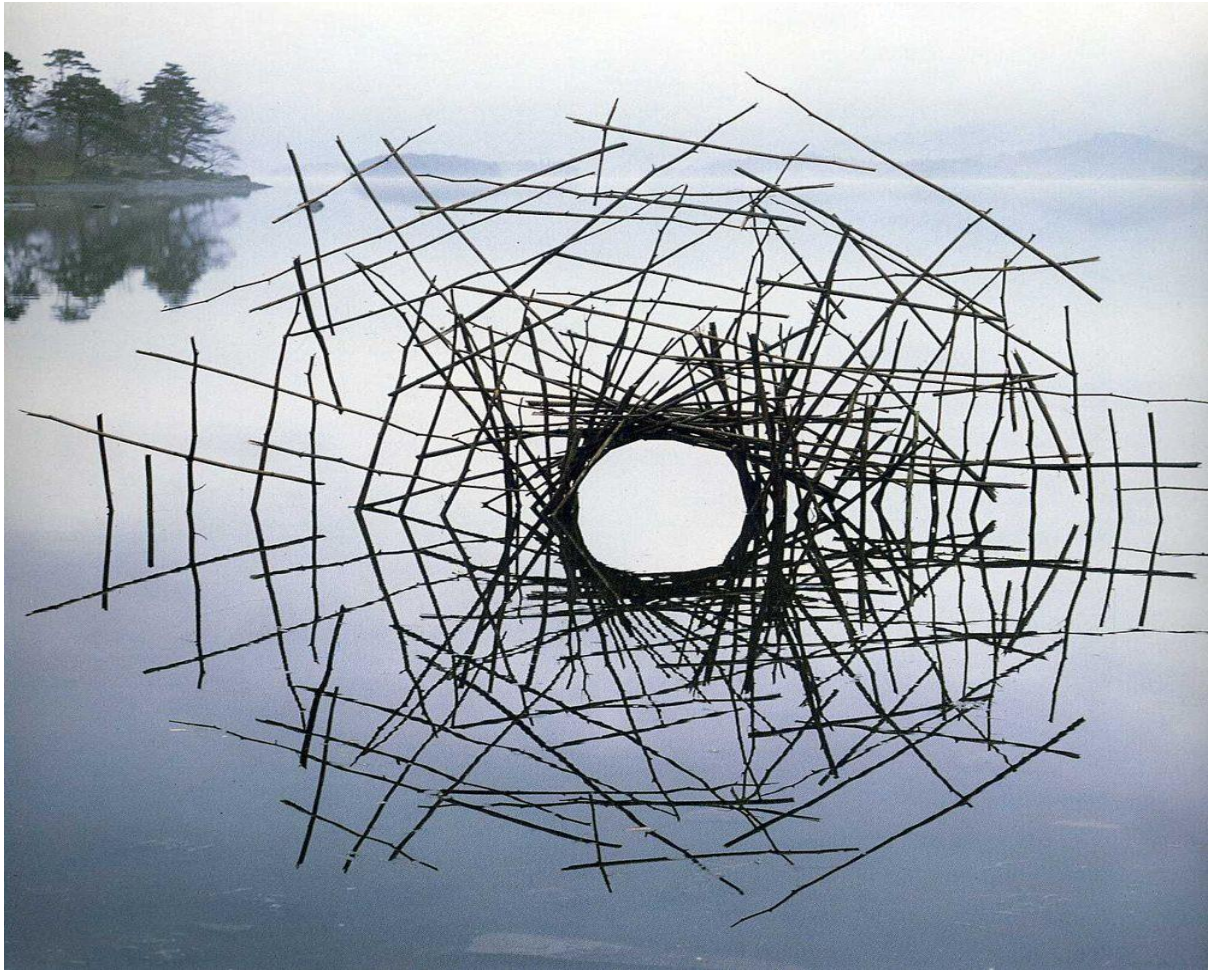


Figure 4

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Figures 1-4

1 Map of Hyde Park <https://rickysfilmreviews.com/2014/05/01/plastic/>

2 Nancy Holt's Sun Tunnels <https://medium.com/@milenaolesinska77/sun-tunnels-nancy-holt-4c90655b1ca4>

3 Richard Long's Labyrinth <http://www.artlyst.com/news/photo-feature-richard-long-walking-a-labyrinth-at-modern-art-oxford/>

4 Andy Goldsworthy's Twig Circle <http://visualmelt.com/Andy-Goldsworthy>