

A different perspective – a photo exhibition

“It’s not what you look at that matters, it’s what you see.” Henry Thoreau

The Bristol Drugs Project group came to Westonbirt Arboretum as part of our “Hidden Voices” project to develop their personal and creative connections with Westonbirt and discover how an arboretum may be relevant to their lives.

Running alongside practical conservation tasks such as coppicing and ride widening, the participants were invited to explore creatively through natural art, creative writing and photography.

Three photos taken by each participant were selected by staff from Westonbirt to form part of the exhibition and we then invited the photographers to give personal responses or titles to their work. Our visitors were invited to make comments throughout the exhibition and many of their thoughts are included at the end.



Anthony



Ben

Burgeoning life

A bud that will open out to a beautiful flower. Around it are the leaves, big and green, reaching up toward the sun, searching for life. It reminds me of myself as a recovering addict and people in general reaching out for life. Life is a beautiful thing and although it can sometimes seem like a dark place we should try to make the most of it.

Precarious beauty

The photo points to the fragility of the foxgloves and obviously their beauty, whilst also alluding to their toxicity to humans and other animals. I like the dichotomy of it being a very beautiful plant but at the same time dangerous – a bit like love or a beautiful woman!

The pattern inside is very beautiful, but it is also a triumph of design. Bees fit right inside to gather the pollen and nectar. There is a second duality of function against beauty. There is a fragility to life epitomised by foxgloves. Life is equally fragile in humans. Its poisoning potential reminds me of my drug use.

Twisted nature

Initially we can see how the tree has twisted this way and that, I imagine to get around other trees and plants, to get at the sunlight. Though not a typical, upright, straight tree it has character and is beautiful in its own individual way, a bit like everything in nature, including man.

This is an example of an organism that has done what it had to do to survive. To me it’s a symbol of hope. I have not lived a ‘conventional life’, have been mentally twisted up, but with sunlight and a good diet I can hope to live a healthy life for the remainder of mine.



Berti

Growth and continuity

Everywhere I looked I saw growth and continuity.

The picture shows a seed cone inside which are tiny seeds that with the right conditions and God's help will grow into something beautiful.

Parasitic plant

Although I'm not sure what it is, it looks like a parasitic plant, but one that does not seem to be harming the tree. Perhaps the tree itself benefits in some way – I hope so.

Up, up and away



Brian

'Potential for life'



David

'I have been in the dark for so long, but now I have seen that there is light'



Fran



Jorge

Colour and beauty

This photo is, in my view, quite powerful. I like the fact this tree's roots are so intense, it is like she's moving, alive. Also there's some sense of personality about it.

This photo really fills my soul in a sense of serenity inside.

Harmony

I like the colour in this photo and there's also a sense of harmony about it. It is like everything is almost perfect, which in a person like me (I'm a Libra) is very important for my mind, to feel that balance around me.

Moon

The first time I looked at this photo, the first word that came to my mind was 'Moon'. I've never been there, but maybe in another life or in my dreams.

There's something secret and sacred about it, which again there's that in my person as well. I always have a secret or two and I think this photo shows my spiritual side, the search for spiritual peace.



Lee



Lenny



Mike

Form

The unusual form of this tree attracted my attention because it has grown in this way.

Activity

I took this photo to show that at Westonbirt you can do other enjoyable activities other than just walking, although walking around Westonbirt, listening to and watching the wildlife, is very enjoyable.

Unmistakenly English

I really like this photo, it has depth and many subtle colour differences. It is unmistakably English countryside.



Rich



Ross



Sam

Brimming

I think this is a particular point in the cycle of life where the body of this messenger of transformation – the cone – is full of all it needs to complete its role. However, in itself, against the vibrant background of new growth, the cone is already dying.

Aesthetically the contrast of brown decay against the strength of the new growth is quite symbolic of sacrifice.

This isn't just a spruce!

This isn't just a spruce, it's the BLUE SPRUCE! Mates with the Pink Panther I think!!

Just a thoroughly beautiful specimen of an astounding species; boldly standing out from the crowd, subtly merging with the seemingly inferior green surround, following punctuated patterns of brown barks.

I was drawn to these far from electric sparks and the closer I got the more they shone, but then became solid, looking denser than steel, still reaching out like they might feel.

Biding its time

Age, permanence and longevity always attract me to old cedars, plus the cool shaded solitude of their stature.

Looking up the blistering seasoned cedar towards the determined tough canopy you know the old things is 'biding its time'. Begrudgingly giving up flaking skin to the rigors of nature, revealing nothing, showing all; green of alien growth shrugged off, almost pink within.

Branches far out of reach hold tight their precious quota of fibrous little green power stations. Each one reluctantly released to stay on the floor, keeping competition at bay.



Sarah



'Meeting in the heavens'
Sara



'Laid to rest'
Sara



'A glimmer of hope and
sunshine' Sara



Sean



Shaun



Sophie



Tina

Mysterious

I like this image because the light and shadow are giving it depth and it also kinda reminds me of Christmas. It feels secretive and mysterious with the green leaves adding a festive hue.

Abundance

The colours in this photo are very rich and the whole area around the scene was vibrant yellows, reds and greens. I felt very aware of the abundance of nature and how glorious natural beauty can be. I wanted to capture the layers too because it looked too warm and comfy, the perfect place to relax.

Cycle of life

I took this photo because initially I was drawn to the contrasting colours. As I was looking closer, I felt inspired by new life growing out of such an ancient looking tree trunk. This made me think about the possibilities for change and how the cycles of life are forever moving and evolving.

Visitor comments

'Inspirational! A wonderful idea and an excellent result. Well done all those who took part'

'Excellent – so much talent is hidden behind the fog of drugs. Heroin and methadone dull the spirit and when one gets clear creativity flows'

'These photos represent all that it is to be human'

'God's creation is truly amazing. Thank you for the exhibition'

'Beautiful works of art. They are inspirational. I absolutely love them as I want to study photography' Levi, age 12

'These photos deserve to be seen more widely' (seconded, thirded and fourthed by others!)

'Thank you for exhibiting these photos. They are very beautiful'

'A few of the photos are blurry, but I like that!'

'Floratastic!'

'These photos are exquisite! They truly capture the magnificence of the wildlife'