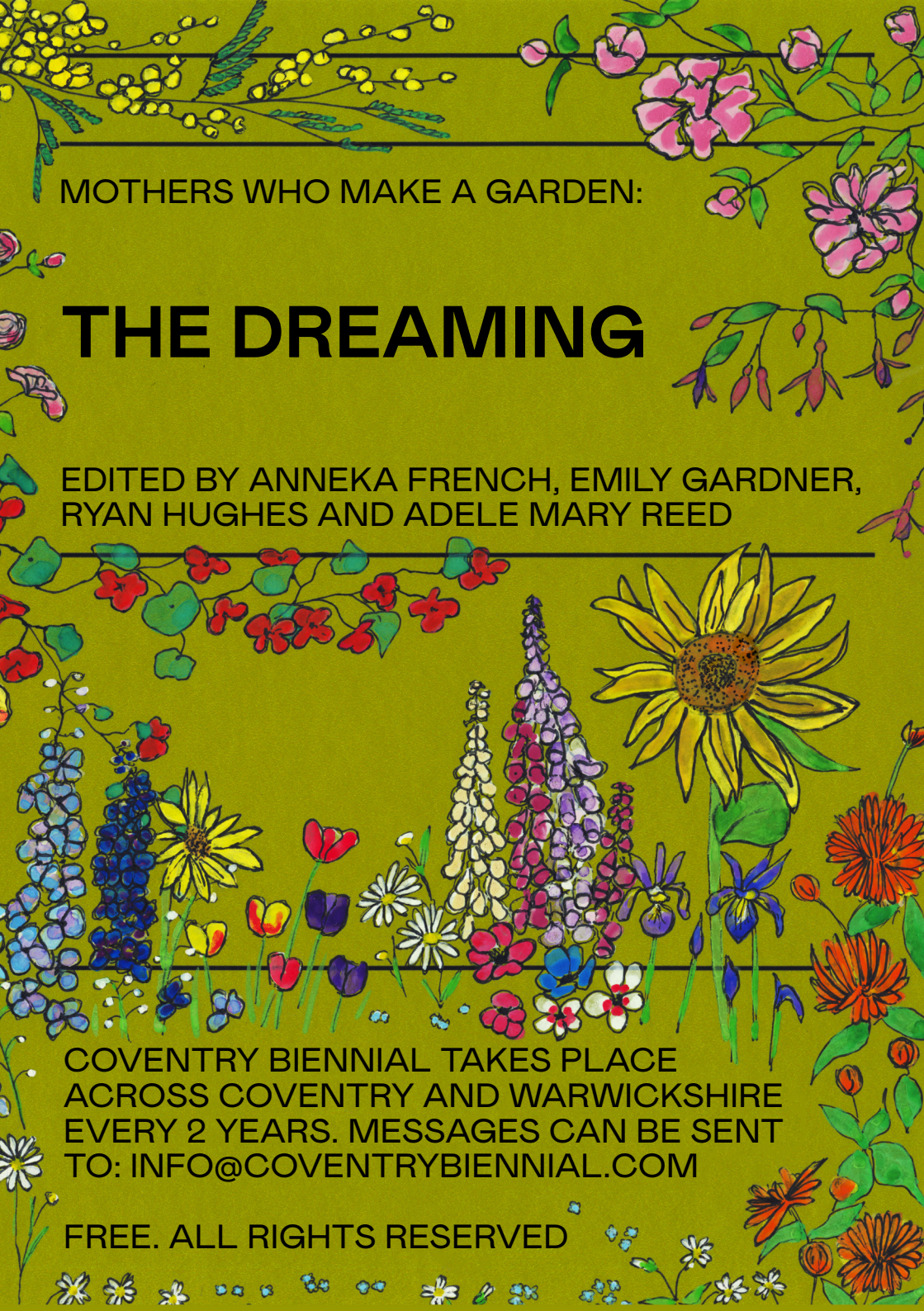




MOTHERS WHO MAKE A GARDEN:

THE DREAMING

EDITED BY ANNEKA FRENCH, EMILY GARDNER,
RYAN HUGHES AND ADELE MARY REED

COVENTRY BIENNIAL TAKES PLACE
ACROSS COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE
EVERY 2 YEARS. MESSAGES CAN BE SENT
TO: INFO@COVENTRYBIENNIAL.COM

FREE. ALL RIGHTS RESERVED



Original announcement image
Adele Mary Reed

Introduction, May 2023

The peer support network Mothers Who Make Coventry Hub have been devising *Mothers Who Make a Garden* as part of Coventry Biennial 2023. The garden is an evolving project, and whilst in its early stages without a fixed location, has been a space to dream and deliver workshops relating to the co-creation of a garden as an artwork within the urban framework of Coventry, UK.

Since January, artists who are mothers have been invited to contribute ideas, create responses, and to share skills, which we are excited to present a breadth of in this publication. As with all MWM happenings, any kind of mother and any kind of maker have been welcome, with sessions being adult-focused but with children also being welcome.

Throughout the process we have been responding to the following questions: *"How welcoming is the city to our care-giving and artist-dreaming needs? What do we require from a beautiful, accessible city centre garden?"*

We have been delighted to be supported in this project by talented local gardener and mother Alice Wood as well as artist, mother, keen grower and wood-wrangler Janet Vaughan from Talking Birds who has generously guided us through building planters.

Within *'The Dreaming'*, we feature a collection of beautiful works, many being original pieces, made by mothers who are makers in the West Midlands and Warwickshire region who have contemplated the notion of what a garden is or could be.

Warm thanks go to Coventry Biennial for embracing this project and embedding it so deeply into their programme. We look forward to how the dreaming becomes a reality in which we can realise and grow further dialogue and artworks.

Adele Mary Reed
Mothers Who Make Coventry Hub Co-ordinator with Coventry Biennial

Contact: adele@coventrybiennial.com
Instagram: [@motherswhomakecov](https://www.instagram.com/motherswhomakecov)
Facebook: [MWMCov](https://www.facebook.com/MWMCov)
Website: linktr.ee/mwmcov

List of Contributors (in alphabetical order)

Adele Mary Reed
Alice Wood
Anneka French
Caitriona Dunnett
Caroline Hackett
Dion Ellis-Taylor
Geeta Sarcar
Izzie Grove
Janet Tryner
Kate Ingram
Natalie Wootton
Polly Merredew
Sally Butcher
Sinéad Patching

Cover illustrated by Gemma Whitford

Workshop participants

Angela Schuster
Emily Gardner
Helen Wheatley
Janet Vaughan
Kim Hackleman
Laura Denham
Lisa Franklin
Lorella Medici
Rachel Bunce

And all the children who have helped out and taken part



Alice Wood



The Woodlouse by Janet Tryner

House-mate

Co-dweller

Garden-mate

Explorer

Home-body

Under-sliver

Crevise finder

Dark damp-er

Too many legs-er

Me, only two legs-er.

Louse under my house,

Better get out,

Otherwise

Snack for toddler.



The Musical Garden

The space that brings calm
You can feel your breath
In tune with birdsong

Listen to the bees being busy
Pollinators - I share my space with glee
I hear the children laugh and play
As the sun dashes in and out of the clouds.

The colours are everywhere
Joyous colours - if you can pause and stare,
There is so much joy to be shared.

The best music is that of a heart smiling;
A mother's heart,
You can hear that restful laugh
When she is in tune with nature
The feminine,
The garden
in perfect symphony!



Geeta Sarcar

Geeta Sarcar

Excerpt from presentation at Here: A Discussion on (Some Local) Artistic Practices symposium on 25th March 2023 by Adele Mary Reed

Maybe the garden is a way to offer gratitude and thanks to the artists in the Hub who have given so much, who have held space for each other, taken space, made space ... not only for each other of course but within the expanses of their care-giving and creative lives. Maybe the garden is symbolic of our multiplicity of voices, of creative practices, a biodiversity of untamable colour and dynamism, illustrative of our boundless potential for growth, re-growth, rest and love.

The garden will be created collaboratively and yet gardens are of course also very personal. For me, the garden I dream of is a garden of colour and aesthetic beauty. Friendships developing amongst large flowers, people quietly tending to the cultivation at their own pace or sitting back and enjoying the space with no expectations put upon them - perhaps an antithesis to other areas of their lives. A space that at its core is designed for beauty and artistic inspiration, rather than sustenance or for practical outcomes.

Mothers Who Make a Garden stems from a friendship and the small patio cottage garden of someone I met with a daughter around the same age as my daughter who had become a single mother around the same time I had ... We had a lot in common, including a love of gardening. Alice's garden imprinted itself on me so brightly. Her dahlias and clematis were both delicate and strong, tenacious and full of love. One evening whilst our daughters played, Alice shared her dream with me of creating a community garden locally, saying that she had hit so many barriers in finding access to overlooked space. When funding arrived to support Mothers Who Make as part of Coventry Biennial, and as I thought more about their upcoming themes, it all started to fall into place.

As part of the Coventry Biennial exhibitions, *Mothers Who Make a Garden* hopes to become a contemporary conceptual artwork. Gardens might be artworks in incredible amounts of ways, whilst also enabling artworks to be born and made. We might find the garden once made turns into Mothers Who Make in the Garden. In the book *Feminist City* by Leslie Kern, Kern writes:

"Adult friendships could be considered among the relationships and values important to the imagining of urban places." And notes that a city could be "set up to nurture, enhance and even rely on women's friendship networks as an integral and deeply necessary part of everyday life."

Octavia Hill, a social reformer who campaigned for access to green spaces and one of the three founders of the National Trust, wrote in 1877 in the essay *Our Common Land*:

"I have dwelt mainly on open spaces affecting the health or social life of our people, but there is another way in which spaces might be made most valuable to them. That is, if they could be made really beautiful."

Another secret power of gardens which I have been surprised by is their ability to get people to say 'yes!' Upon approaching Janet Vaughan from Talking Birds, for example, to give a planter making workshop, I almost got the impression that for this cause, she could only have enthusiasm. In that sense, I feel that gardens are in people's bones. Once you've been touched by them, you just know. And we really want everyone to know! And to insist on having gardens near them, for them.

Extract from **In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens** an essay from the book **In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens: Womanist Prose** by Alice Walker (San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1983).

"But the telling of these stories, which came from my mother's lips as naturally as breathing, was not the only way my mother showed herself as an artist. For stories, too, were subject to being distracted, to dying without conclusion. Dinners must be started, and cotton must be gathered before the big rains. The artist that was and is my mother showed itself to me only after many years. This is what I finally noticed:

Like Mem, a character in The Third Life of Grange Copeland, my mother adorned with flowers whatever shabby house we were forced to live in. And not just your typical straggly country stand of zinnias, either. She planted ambitious gardens – and still does – with over fifty different varieties of plants that bloom profusely from early March until late November. Before she left home for the fields, she watered her flowers, chopped up the grass, and laid out new beds. When she returned from the fields she might divide clumps of bulbs, dig a cold pit, uproot and replant roses, or prune branches from her taller bushes or trees – until night came and it was too dark to see.

Whatever she planted grew as if by magic, and her fame as a grower of flowers spread over three counties. Because of her creativity with her flowers, even my memories of poverty are seen through a screen of blooms – sunflowers, petunias, roses, dahlias, forsythia, spirea, delphiniums, verbena ... and on and on.

And I remember people coming to my mother's yard to be given cuttings from her flowers; I hear again the praise showered on her because whatever rocky soil she landed on, she turned into a garden. A garden so brilliant with colors, so original in its design, so magnificent with life and creativity, that to this day people drive by our house in Georgia – perfect strangers and imperfect strangers – and ask to stand or walk among my mother's art.

I notice that it is only when my mother is working in her flowers that she is radiant, almost to the point of being invisible – except as Creator: hand and eye. She is involved in work her soul must have. Ordering the universe in the image of her personal conception of Beauty.

Her face, as she prepares the Art that is her gift, is a legacy of respect she leaves to me, for all that illuminates and cherishes life. She has handed down respect for the possibilities – and the will to grasp them. For her, so hindered and intruded upon in so many ways, being an artist has still been a daily part of her life. This ability to hold on, even in very simple ways, is work black women have done for a very long time."

Fair use disclaimer: This extract is shared for research purposes only. I do not own this content, all rights and credits go to it's rightful owner as cited above. No copyright infringement intended.



Untitled 4, lumen print
Caitriona Dunnett

Mothers Who Make a Garden: The Dreaming Cover Illustration by Gemma Whitford

It's been wonderful to work with Rugby-based artist Gemma Whitford to realise our cover design. Gemma created several versions of hand-painted illustrations which were informed by flowers put forward by members of the Hub. Thank you to everyone who submitted a flower for this beautiful collective representation.

Nasturtium - Adele Mary Reed
Foxglove - Alice Wood
Delphinium - Anita Sharman
Daisy - Caroline Hackett
Anemone - Dana Hall
Fuchsia - Denise Littlewood ("It reminds me of my nan's front garden; this is the 20th year of her passing.")
Troika Rose - Dion Ellis-Taylor
Peony - Geeta Sarcar
Helicrysum - Izzie Grove
Common whitlowgrass - Janet Tryner
Chrysanthemum - Jessica Timmis ("Because they are called mum.")
Forget-me-not - Jo Gane
Mimosa - Kate Ingram ("Bright and sunny and for international women's day.")
Iris - Natalie Wootton ("For autism awareness week.")
Rose - Polly Merredew ("My daughter's middle name.")
Sunflower - Sally Butcher ("My son just planted some with my mum to give them to my daughter for her birthday.")
Tulip - Sinéad Patching

Gemma writes: *"It was an absolute pleasure to draw this special garden on the page for Mothers Who Make Coventry. Inspired by the natural world, you can often find me immersed in my sketchbook, capturing flowers, birds and wildlife in ink and watercolour. I graduated from Nottingham Trent School of Art in 2007 and returned to drawing during lockdown when I rediscovered the joy of creating through daily drawing in the garden and by doing art activities with my children."*



Caroline Hackett



MINT - DIGESTION



LAVENDER - SLEEP, REST, PEACE



SAGE - HOT FLUSHES & NIGHT SWEATS



GERANIUM - OXYTOCIN (SMELL & TOUCH)

Tending to (You).

You can liken growing plants in a garden to raising children in the world; Relative input is required, tender care, loving words, gentle encouragement, A firmness, some protection from external forces, an initial warm womb Space for the little sprouts to feel ready to emerge.

The right conditions will make for a fruitful flowering and in the main, Though with a little cultivation, much of the unique scent, the joyful expression, Moment to moment changes, the explosions of colour and freedom to move; This will all happen on its own accord, as nature intended, and we can count our Blessings that we are so very lucky to bear witness to these happenings. For both plant and babe to flourish, a deepening of the formative years, to set Down strong roots, is vital to reach upwards and away with confidence and ease; Thus, being able to face all weathers, knowing they are being held by an invisible Hand, tethered to the beneath.

In the latter years a strong prune is prudent; to cut off tangled, lifeless branches To promote a new direction of growing. Much as the parents role is that of quiet observation, poignant interactions, to know when to step in and when to Step out, to offer guidance or to hold them in space, this is an artform in Itself.

by Izzie Grove.



Navigation-sources of perimenopause relief, gelli print
Kate Ingram

Izzie Grove



Polly Merredew

Back Garden of Alice Wood in Earlsdon, Coventry
Photos by Alice Wood



Uncovered Covers (Collagraphic Monoprints with Pencil (ongoing series) by Sally Butcher

These Collagraphic Monoprints are made from printed gendered coverings, including 'real' surfaces like human hair and mixed with 'artificial' ones such as lace, hairnets and fabric flowers, intersecting with hand drawn elements that are reminiscent of female reproductive anatomy. These pieces play with notions of the 'monstrous feminine', intending to provoke desire and disgust at the unbounded female body. Borders are playfully transgressed as outer feminine coverings are integrated with internal female body parts, permeating between seductive textures, protective layers and visceral embodiment.

it threw blossom bombs by Anneka French

In fair fantasy it flew faster,
higher than it had ever gone before
passed for play
through a body flying
through space
and blue sky.
Through thickness and thinness
the thorn in the flesh caught sharp
in each step,
reminding throat and thighbone
of their fragility
and soft uselessness.

In bloom and despite blight
the horses at the palais de dance
performed pirouettes
and pas de deux
between carrot breaks.
A wonderful flavour,
they neighed,
through canters, stops and stars
and amid applause
from the enraptured punters,
who, despite confusion as to their geographical origins
- Viennese or Spanish was anybody's guess -
were happy to part with their Euros nevertheless.

In fair fantasy it flew further this time,
scattering light
and precious petal pinkness.
It aimed to communicate
through thoughts and thoughtlessness,
and through it all
it threw blossom bombs
like candy floss,
thick
and cloying
and delicious.



Natalie Wootton

Excerpt from presentation at Here: A Discussion on (Some Local) Artistic Practices symposium on 25th March 2023 by Alice Wood

I've been feeling the itch to have some sort of creative outlet for a couple of years and had been hoping to be able to channel that urge into making a garden of some sort or another. My vision of the garden is very much aligned with Adele's; that's to say a really sensory experience that prioritises beauty, abundance and connection. My dream for a garden, and my hope for our garden, is that it will be somewhere filled with the colour and texture that an abundance of flowers and foliage gives as well as the sound of birdsong, voices and insects buzzing around and the heady scent of summer flowers mingling together. I envisage a place where people of all ages, and with different experiences and circumstances, come together within the unique space that I believe a garden can be, to collaborate to bring it to life.

My relationship with gardening has been cultivated (pun maybe intended) over about the last 12 years or so, and whilst my efforts, particularly at the start, weren't always successful, they were always led by enthusiasm and a zeal for the potential to create glorious spaces in often less than glorious surroundings.

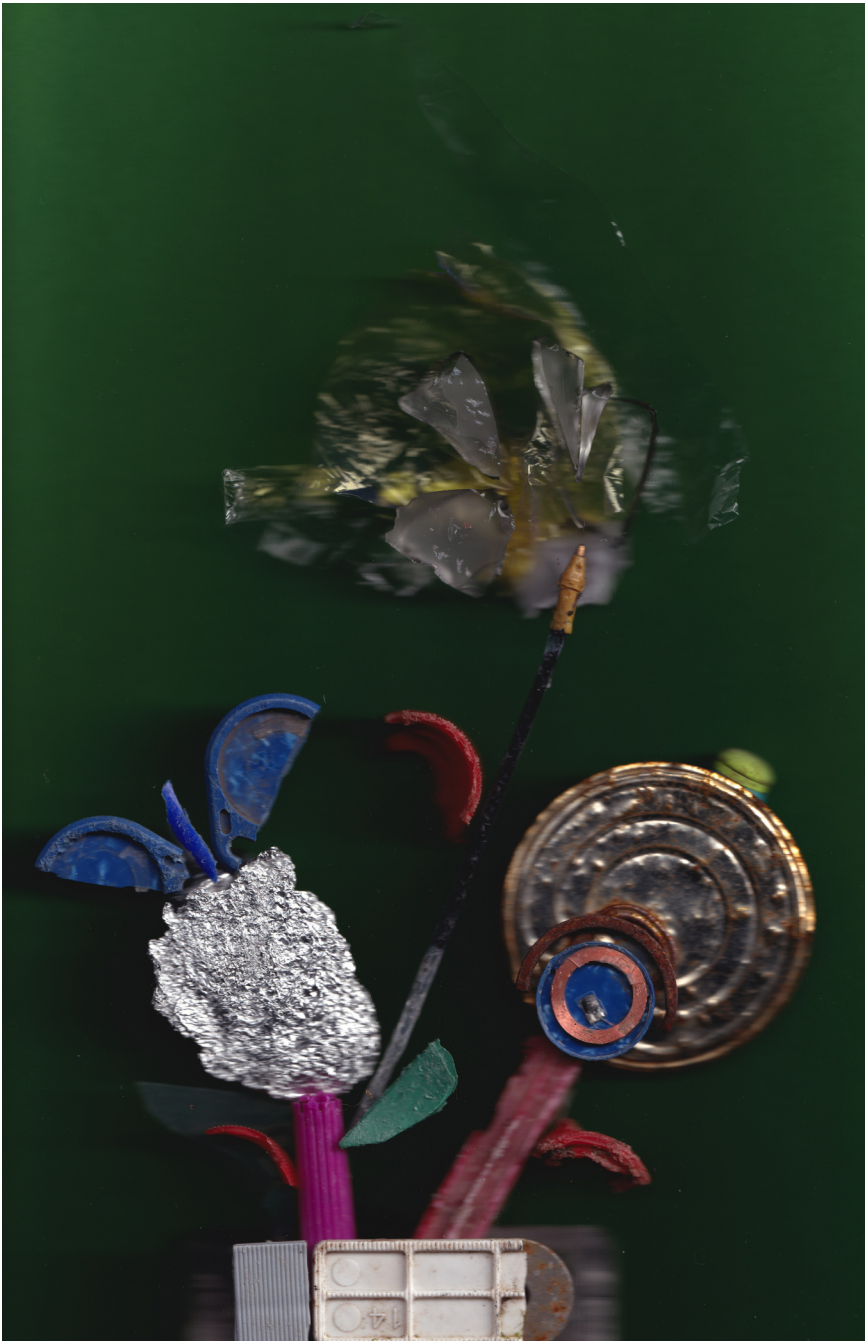
I feel in some ways an interloper in being introduced as a gardener; anything I know is entirely self-taught and led by a combination of instinct and trial and error when it comes to what to plant and where, as well as a hefty amount of time spent referring to the trusty internet!

I think my passion for gardening began when I lived in East London in my 20s. I lived in Bethnal Green, right around the corner from Columbia Road Flower Market which really is a sight to behold. Previous visitors will no doubt remember but for those who haven't experienced the madness and colour and chaos, the weekly market sees a small terraced street transformed overnight to host nurseries and sellers from all over London crammed together selling a huge array of cut flowers and, the thing that caught my interest, plants to grow.

As a person who didn't drive, and who therefore hadn't had any real access to a garden centre before, the discovery that each week I could go and indulge my burgeoning passion for attempting to not kill plants was a revelation.

A lot has changed in the 12 years since; amongst other things, I've become a mother, moved cities and now own an actual garden which has meant I've been able to grow more, start plants from seed for the first time and develop new skills along the way. In that time I've visited and become aware of some incredible gardens across the UK and some of my favourites are those that have been created by artists either as an extension of their practice and, even more than that, as inspiration to create the art they live for. Gardens like Derek Jarman's Prospect Cottage, the garden at Charleston and Virginia Woolf's garden in Sussex sit alongside Monet's garden at Giverny in terms of beauty and their ability to inspire. There is a lovely letter by the artist Vanessa Bell where she talks about her garden at Charleston, which ends:

"... it's full of reds of all kinds, scabious and hollyhocks and mallows and every kind of red from red lead to black. Pokers are coming out. It's all in very good order and we have masses of plums and apples. I have of course begun by painting some flowers, it seems the inevitable way to begin here."



Everything I found on the way home from school on one side of Molland Drive, digital scan, March 2023
Janet Tryner



Kate Ingram

Hill Close Gardens by Caitriona Dunnett

Hill Close Gardens captures the timelessness of one of the last groups of detached Victorian pleasure gardens in the UK. The gardens date back to 1845 and were tended by tradesmen. They fell into disrepair and were saved from development by local residents. The plots have been fully restored by volunteers to address the planting of their original owners.

The gardens were invested in, lost and then recreated. Each generation of gardener brought with them a layer of history. Dunnett has created a multi-layered process to engage the gardens past. She converted her photographs into contact negatives to make cyanotypes. Then she toned them with pomegranate referencing 19th century painting and photography.

Dunnett was drawn to the narratives of the tradesmen and photographed their landscaped plots and summerhouses. Whispers and tales from different times follow you around the garden. A sense of peace pays tribute to the years spent cultivating the land. Nature flourishes amongst the hedged plots and Dunnett recalled lost gardens from her childhood. She has explored time's passage through the gardens and attempted to thread these different layers together.

This series was exhibited at Hill Close Gardens, Warwick during the summer of 2022. It was curated by Alice Swatton and funded by Art Friends of Warwickshire. Grain Projects supported the initial project. Accompanying the exhibition, Dunnett installed lumen prints in progress in 5 of the gardens' historic summerhouses. She picked a selection of plants from the garden and they were exposed in pre-owned frames of different shapes and sizes.



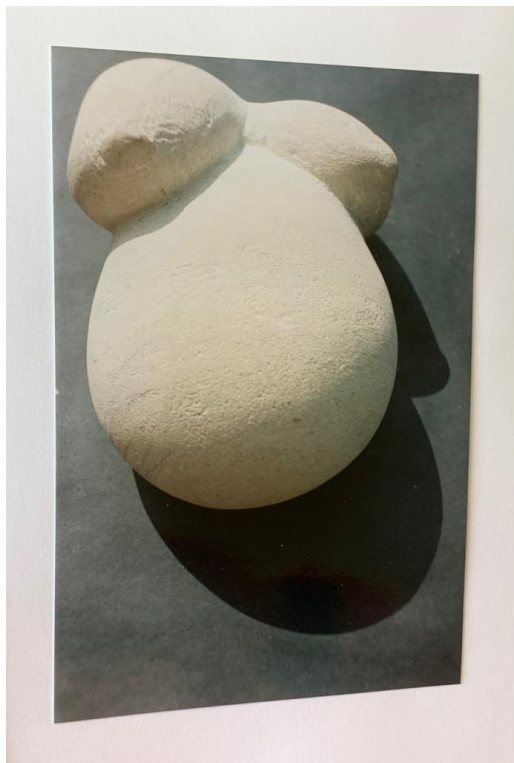
Bramley's Seedling Culinary, Plot 30, Hill Close Gardens, toned cyanotype



Sumach Tree, Plot 12, Hill Close Gardens, toned cyanotype



Natalie Wootton



Germination
by Dion Ellis-Taylor

Stone carving, 1993-1995
Ancaster Limestone.
Dimensions: 'within arm's
length'



photos of wild flowers that the council plant on islands
Natalie Wootton

Photo-documentation of Dahlia Tuber workshop with Alice Wood, 12th March 2023 by Sinéad Patching

See more of Sinéad Patching's photographs from this session in the Coventry Biennial edited volume *Volume One: ... like a short cut through the brambles*





Dahlia tubers potted and collectively cared for: Art Fair, Café au Lait, Sarasota Joy, Copperboy, Hy Trio, Imperialis Alba, Kelsey Annie Joy, Kogane Fubuki, Myrtle's Folly, Night Butterfly, Paradise City, Sweet Suzanne, Wishes n Dreams. We share regular updates in a Dahlia Club WhatsApp group.

Dahlia Tubers in Situ



Alice Wood



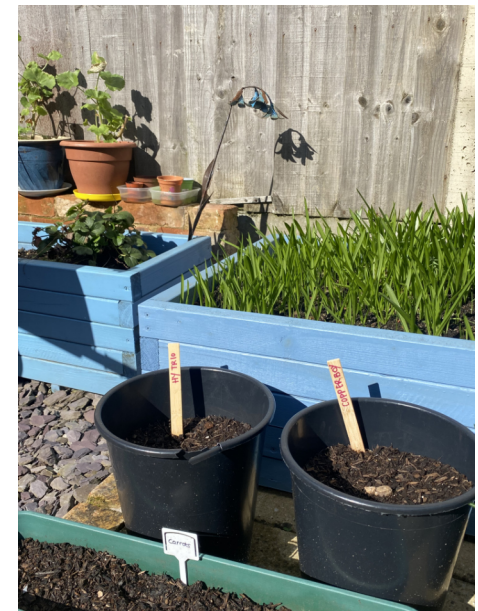
Caroline Hackett



Emily Gardner



Adele Reed



Kate Ingram

need
for green
green space,



Turtle dove



Let's help
nature!



particularly urban

Carefully

blended



Yellowhammer



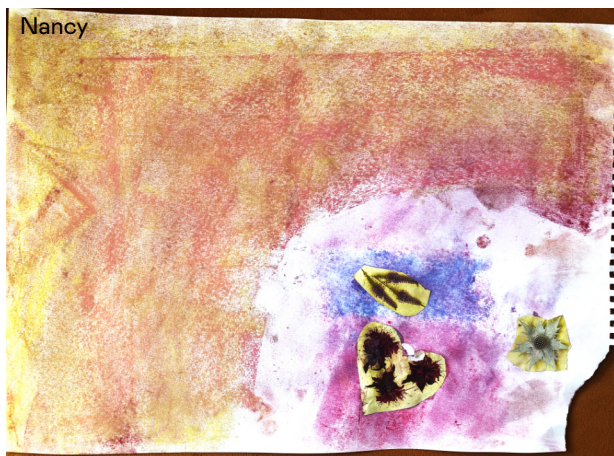
**Photos of Planting Box workshop with Janet Vaughan,
23rd April 2023** by Adele Mary Reed and Janet Vaughan



Mortar
Darkroom apparatus, 1995. Dimensions: 'handheld'
Dion Ellis-Taylor

Works by Children

Created during the Mothers Who Make a Garden programme



Timeline



27th January 2023 - Old Grammar School, Coventry, site visit



25th February 2023 - Garden Dreaming workshop and peer support, The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum, Coventry



12th March 2023 - Dahlia Tuber workshop with Alice Wood, The Herbert Art Gallery & Museum



25th March 2023 - Panel discussion at 'Here' Symposium, FAB Building, Warwick University



16th April 2023 - Research trip to Garden Museum, London with Alice Wood, Dion Ellis-Taylor & Adele Reed



23rd April 2023 - Planting Box Building workshop with Janet Vaughan at Talking Birds, Coventry.



Coventry Biennial Ltd,
Floor 4, Eaton House,
Eaton Road,
Coventry,
CV1 2FJ

www.coventrybiennial.com

Unlimited Digital Copy

Published and produced by:

**COVENTRY
BIENNIAL**

MOTHERS Who Make

Coventry

This publication was generously supported by:



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

