

Seeds, Trees & Mountains: A mixed media exhibition exploring the impact of climate change

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Seeds, Trees & Mountains

Aga Khan Centre Gallery

10 Handyside St, London N1C 4DN 24 February–30 June 2023 For dates and timings for screenings & other events see 'Notes to Editors'



Emily Ketteringham, Trees 1, silk screen print on paper, 2021



Aga Khan Centre Gallery is proud to present Seeds, Trees & Mountains, a mixed media exhibition exploring the impact of climate change, in partnership with Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew and One Resilient Earth. The exhibition features work by artists Veeda Ahmed, Samantha Buckley, Emily Ketteringham, Karim Ahmed Khan, Samanta Batra Mehta, Olga Prinku, Andrea Roberts and Diana Taylor.

'The Earth turns to Gold, in the Hands of the Wise'

Jalāl al-Dīn Muhammad Rūmī

This quote forms the overarching statement for Aga Khan Centre Gallery's first in a series of exhibitions exploring issues around climate change. The presentation is a unique partnership between AKC Gallery (AKCG), Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH) and Wakehurst – RBG Kew's wild botanic garden in Sussex - home to the Millennium Seed Bank and over 500 acres of diverse landscapes and plants from across the globe. Six of the participating artists have all undertaken residences at Wakehurst or AKAH, drawing on their information resources to create work reflecting climate control. Two of the participating artists have responded specifically to the Rūmī quote.

Seeds, Trees & Mountains, which commenced in January 2023, is formed of three phases, beginning with a screening of Voices from the Roof of the World, an environmental documentary film series sponsored by Aga Khan University, Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, Aga Khan Foundation and University of Central Asia about the climate crisis in High Mountain Asia.

The three-week film screening of Seasons 1 & 2 of Voices from the Roof of the World aims to

Diana Taylor, Untitled, mixed media on canvas, 2022



Andrea Roberts, Tree Study 1, ink on paper, 2022



Karim Ahmad, Untitled Trees, pastel, charcoal and oil on paper, 2022 - 2023

raise awareness around the climate crisis in the earth's highest mountain region stretching from the Pamirs to the Himalayas.

The films have been produced entirely by local filmmakers from Pakistan, India, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, and Nepal under the direction of Emmy-winning executive producer Andrew Tkach. In mid-April the Gallery will host a special screening of two of the films with an interactive discussion with the series producer Andrew Tkach, one of the filmmakers, and a representative from one of the project sponsors (AKAH).

The overarching aim of the project is to share AKAH's research around environmental stewardship and climate change adaptation using nature-based solutions, alongside RBG Kew's monumental Garfield Weston-funded Global Tree Seed Bank Programme. This programme conducts vital work around the preservation of key medicinal plants and endangered tree species in Pakistan, a country that connects all three partners. The ambition is to create a unique partnership that encourages, supports and champions the exchange of knowledge and resources and which results in the alchemy of a beautiful and empowering visual art installation that interprets Rūmī's quote.

Phase 2 of Seeds, Trees & Mountains is an AKU-ISMC, AKF-UK & IIS-sponsored exhibition that includes collaborations with Aga Khan Agency for Habitat and Wakehurst. Running from 24 February to 30 June, and staged at the Aga Khan Gallery, Kings Cross, the exhibition features artists Diana Taylor, Emily Ketteringham, Karim Ahmed Khan, Olga Prinku, Samanta Batra Mehta, Veeda Ahmed, Samantha Buckley and Andrea Roberts, all of whom have created artworks reflecting the abundance of biodiversity. The artwork shown will include existing and new work produced during their residencies, revealing an idealistic view of the abundance of biodiversity based on specific information in relation to the work the partner organisations are involved, including data from Kew's Garfield Weston Global Tree Seed Bank and AKAH's work on nature-based solutions. The other two artists have made work responding directly to the Rūmī quote.

Phase 3 will take place on Thursday 20 April, two days prior to Earth Day (22 April 2023) and marks a dramatic shift in the exhibition content. Artist Diana Taylor will change her installation through a performative event revealing the reworking of 68% of her artwork, which includes a panel discussion with Laureline Simon from One Resilient Earth and special guests. This reflects the 68% loss of global biodiversity over the past four decades. New work from other artists will also be added to highlight the protection and preservation work undertaken by the partner organisations and to show how many can support the fight against the climate change – the sharing and raising awareness of knowledge is key to the project's overarching aim.

A Learning Programme to accompany the exhibition is also being planned, with various virtual and in-person events to engage the public including artists talks, recycle and reuse workshops, and talks and workshops featuring the work of RBG Kew and AKAH.

The background behind this series of exhibitions comes from a confluence of ideas: making global issues important local issues, sharing Aga Khan Development Network's and its many agencies' current work around climate change, the key messages from climate change from both His Highness the Aga Khan IV and his son, Prince Rahim. Aga Khan Development Network's commitment to climate protection and adaptation is firmly established. AKDN's overriding principles are built on clear values and ethics that permeate all AKDN organisations and operations. Over the next five years AKC Gallery will curate imaginative and informative exhibitions and associated learning programmes focusing on climate change.

Says Hadi Husain, Director of Strategic Initiatives, AKAH: 'The people of High Mountain Asia live on the frontline of climate change. This year's record-breaking floods in Pakistan are just one example of the devastating consequences. We must listen to their voices and each take responsibility to combat this global crisis. The biggest threat to climate action is that people might think that it is too hard to succeed or that the problems are too big to impact. This exhibition offers a unique perspective on work that AKAH and RBG Kew are doing to protect habitats and promote climate change adaptation, inviting visitors to reflect on the issues and how they can take action.'

Esen Kaya, Gallery Curator, added, 'We are delighted to collaborate with Aga Khan Agency for Habitat (AKAH), Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and One Resilient Earth on this special exhibition. Through this collaboration we are able to shine a light on their incredible work around climate change. They each bring years of ground-breaking, inspiring, and transformative nature-based solutions and the human connection to the climate crisis. The connection between AKAH and Kew is the work they are pioneering in Pakistan, in particular the nature-based work around the conservation and preservation around indigenous seeds, trees and for AKAH, their work within Pakistan's mountainous landscape. This has been a very special coming together of organisations who may not have otherwise connected, so through a shared passion for active climate resolve, we realised this exhibition.

I am delighted we could invite artists from around the world, including here in the UK, to respond to the work of AKAH and The Global Tree Seed Bank programme. They each also bring a breadth of responses and varied creative language, enabling us to realise a powerful and thoughtprovoking exhibition that we hope will inspire and engage all age groups.

Through a series of virtual artist residencies our exhibition creates a powerful visual response to an aspect of climate change and in particular, it highlights the 68% loss of biodiversity globally. The exhibition brings together a variety of artist responses from across the world, from Karim Ahmed Khan who lives and works in the Hunza Valley, northern Pakistan to Emily Ketteringham, who charts and surveys landscapes across the UK to measure its geology. They each bring a personal commentary on the subject in a thought-provoking and meditative way.

The exhibition is curated in a unique way as it begins with the lusciousness and abundance of biodiversity but at the mid-point and through a performative piece, artist Diana Taylor will rework,

remove and reframe 68% of her artwork in response to the global statistic. This will be a dramatic shift in the exhibition content and aesthetic. Other subtle shifts in artwork by the exhibiting artists will also be made, allowing a space for further conversations around the global climate emergency. We would like to invite audiences to view the exhibition at the start and return, to engage in events that aim to inspire and to create an opportunity for exchange and individual calls for action.

Exhibitions do not normally change mid-point, but I felt this subject matter needed to engage audiences in a unique way and so, I was thinking about how that might happen. It felt appropriate to think about the 68% global loss of biodiversity as a marker to create a platform where we could have more meaningful conversations and engagement around climate change. While the exhibition includes beautiful and thought-provoking artwork, the contextual narrative around this serves as a stark reminder of where we are globally. So I hope the content of this exhibition creates impetus in us all to do what we can as individuals, and collectively, to help raise awareness and address the climate issue head on.

The exhibition also includes a variety of contextual narratives on our partner organisations' work around the world, including Aga Khan Development Network's climate ambition and commitment to reach net zero by 2030 across its global agencies. The exhibition includes a couple of films from AKDN's Voices of the Roof of the World documentary series – a series of powerful films around the impact of climate change on the communities in northern Pakistan.

This exhibition promises to be inspiring and engaging for all ages. So, there is something for everyone, from intriguing and powerful artwork, to detailed information on the work of AKAH, Royal Botanic Gardens Kew and One Resilient Earth, a variety of publications and children's books on the subject too – so younger audiences have an opportunity to learn from the exhibition too.'

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Notes to Editors:

Participating artists:

Emily Ketteringham

Born into a family of mathematicians and engineers, Emily's work reflects the precise and analytical ways of thinking she inherited.

The influence of her original degree in Wood and Metalwork from University of Brighton can be seen in her interest in exploring a wide range of materials within her projects, and her continuing exploration of the materiality of the screen printing process. Emily sees herself fundamentally as a craftsperson and this ethos of skill and care is evident in all of her work.

After studying for her PGCE, Emily taught in secondary schools for 12 years, before returning to her practice when she discovered her affinity for screen printing at evening classes. Falling in love with the precision of the process, and the methodical layering of colours, eventually led to Emily leaving teaching in 2011 to concentrate on her practice as a artist/printmaker. Emily returned to further education, gaining a distinction for her MA in Multidisciplinary Print in 2016, and also for her subsequent studies on the MA Design course, both at the University of West of England, Bristol.

The discovery in 2016 that she has Aphantasia (has no 'mind's eye') led to a profound shift in Emily's work. Previously architectural, her subject matter now more often comes from rocks, geology and maps. Recent residencies in Northumberland and Norfolk have highlighted the importance of landscape and walking to her practice. Collecting and categorising – either physical objects like sand and pebbles, or less tangible ideas of colour - is an important element of Emily's work. Colours are analysed and arranged in an attempt to come to terms with her Aphantasia.

Emily has completed a number of public art projects including a major piece as part of the refurbishment of Bristol's Old Vic theatre. Emily's 'colour of place' screen-prints were shortlisted for Boodle Hatfield Printmaking Prize at the 2020 Woolwich print fair, and her work was recently featured in the print journal Pressing Matters.

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Karim Ahmed Khan

Karim Ahmed Khan born in the Hunza valley on 11March 1990. He graduated from the prestigious Art institution of Pakistan, National College of Art Lahore in Fine Art (Sculpture) with "Honors" (2010- 2015). He taught sculpture at the National College of Arts for six years. He participated in a number of group shows nationally and internationally and recently won the Arjumand Painting Award 2021. He was nominated for the sovereign Asian Art Prize 2022 from Pakistan and represented Pakistan in the Dubai Expo 2022. He lives in Hunza. Karim's current body of work investigates the independent issues of the outcomes of war-on man and on nature, deforestation, and global warming. His chosen medium, charcoal, reflects these concerns as it is a by-product of a volatile process in itself, acting as a metaphor for life cycle, and the potential of a human to rise from the ashes and strive for improvement.

The World Will Recover

In the past couple of years, the world endured several natural and human inflicted calamities in the form of climate change, the Australian bushfire, the Israel-Palestine conflict, the Afghanistan war, the current pandemic of Covid-19, the Russia-Ukraine war and the list goes on. It feels as if the world will soon come to an end. As Christine Caine states that, 'Sometimes when you are in a dark place you think you have been buried, but you have been planted.' Yes, it requires patience and strength and, in such times, hope and positivity are the driving forces that keep us moving. This notion can be seen in my work wherein I use burnt charcoal which is guite unusual for human imagination. I believe that a slight change in our perceptions causes manifold changes in our actions. My work symbolises that Mother Nature has a unique potential to heal in its ways and the same phenomenon applies to human nature. Fissure also acts as a metaphor for the creation's both nature and human potential to rise from the ashes. Thus, we need to appreciate this process of healing and be optimistic that the world will recover soon.

O @karim a khan

Samanta Batra Mehta

Samanta Batra Mehta's work has been exhibited at art galleries and museums in the US and abroad including at the Queens Museum of the Arts, the Hudson River Museum, the Hunterdon Museum, the Taubman Museum of Art in the US, Fotografia Cassa di Risparmio di Modena and Museo d'Arte Orientale in Italy and at 'Reading Room', a partner exhibition at the Kochi Biennale 2014. Her art fair participations include Bologna Arte Fiere, Artissima (Turin), the Salon du Dessin Contemporain (Paris), Art Dubai, India Art Fair (New Delhi), Art Stage (Singapore), and Art Basel Hong Kong. Her solo presentations include: 'Cabinet of Curiosities' at Shrine Empire, New Delhi, which was nominated for the Forbes India Art Award in 2014, 'The Journey of Secrets', at Sakshi Art Gallery, Mumbai in 2015, and 'The Crucible of Fantasy' at Art Basel Hong Kong 2015, presented by Shrine Empire Gallery.

Samanta's works are included in various art collections including at the Fondazione Fotografia Cassa di Risparmio di Modena in Italy, the RPG Group, India, the Jindal Collection, India, the Birla Art Foundation, India. She was awarded the Joan Mitchell Foundation's 2014-2015 Painters & Sculptors Grant Award. She participated in Wave Hill's 2020 Winter Workspace Residency in New York and is a 2021 SqW:Lab Fellowship recipient.

Samanta lives and works in New York. www.samantabatramehta.com @@samanta_batra_mehta_

Olga Prinku

Born in Moldova and now living in North Yorkshire, UK, Olga studied graphic design as a mature student at the Cumbria Institute of the Arts. She originated the concept of flowers-on-tulle embroidery in 2016 and has since continued to develop her techniques for embroidering with real organic material and her identity as a botanical artist.

Olga's work has been exhibited at venues including the Aspex Gallery (Portsmouth, 2019), Stitch Festival (London, 2020), Aga Khan Centre Gallery (London, 2021) and Open Gallery (Halifax, 2022). Her first book, *Dried Flower Embroidery*, was published by Quadrille in 2021. She was a guest judge on Kirstie's Handmade Christmas (UK Channel 4, 2021) and a mentor for the Hand and Lock Prize for Embroidery (2022). She has been selected to participate in Collect (London, 2023) as part of the Collect Open group of artists.

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Andrea Roberts

After many years of teaching and studying art Andrea Roberts graduated from Newcastle University with an MA in Fine Art in 2006. Andrea lives and makes her art in Northumberland, an area of outstanding natural beauty which has influenced much of her work.

The sinewy shadows and outlines of trees in her current pieces may also be seen to reference the intricate arterial branches of the human body, and the traceries of time passing. They hint at the letting go of personal boundaries and an optimistic sense of possibility.

This optimism, however, has been challenged more recently by the effects of climate change on those seemingly indestructible trees. Like forests all over the world, they are diminishing at an alarming rate due to disease, pollution, and climate change. As the green lungs of the planet, trees are vital to our health and survival. They hold deep-rooted spiritual, medicinal and cultural values. Andrea's work in the exhibition will reflect on these issues.

Veeda Ahmed

Veeda Ahmed is a London based artist, researcher, and educator. She holds an MFA (Gold Medal) from the University of Punjab, Pakistan (1974), has studied at the Ruskin School of Art, University of Oxford (1977) and in 2013 completed her PhD from the Prince's Foundation School of Traditional Arts, London.

Ahmed has trained under renowned miniature and icon painters, illumination masters, Japanese paper makers and skilled geometers. Her forms move freely without boundaries as she draws from these knowledge pools to create a way of painting that blurs the lines between the traditional, representational, and contemporary.

In Ahmed's works, her gaze is directed upwards towards the heavens – birds, angels, branches, wings, the tree of life, 365 moons – feature prominently. She pulls together the threads of learning to weave a dialogue with traditional miniature painting, illumination, sacred geometry,

and western art.

She has exhibited widely, recently holding two solo exhibitions- Echoes of Contemplation (2017) at the Prince's Foundation and In the Absence of Shadows (2019), Minaretein Gallery, Doha. In 2020 she participated in the Discerning Eye Exhibition in London. Her work is held in private and public collections all over the world.

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Samantha Buckley

Samantha Buckley is a specialist painter of Indian miniature art. She loves to paint animals, flowers and most recently, portraits.

Her work is created using the traditional techniques of Indian painting. Samantha also works as a designer, being commissioned to create beautiful designs for ceramics, fabric, glassware, and stationary. Her knowledge of Indian art has led to Samantha passing on her knowledge through her teaching.

Throughout Samantha's career there has been a close involvement with design. Her first commission was for a colourful set of greetings cards for IKEA. Leading on from this, Samantha was commissioned by Highgrove Enterprises, to create a decorative range of ceramics based on HRH The Prince Of Wales's rare-breed hens, called "The Highrove Hen".

Later working in conjunction with Burleigh Potteries and Highgrove, Samantha designed a delicate range of floral ceramics to celebrate the planting of 60 wildflower meadows. In 2010, the Elephant Parade approached Samantha to work on a project to support the Asian elephant in the wild.

Decorating two life-size baby fibreglass elephants, her work could be seen as part of a 250-strong parade of painted elephants around London. Samantha also takes private commissions for animal and people portraits.

Samantha Buckley lives and works in Bristol, England. www.samanthabuckley.co.uk @@samanthabuckleydesigns

Project Partners

AGA KHAN AGENCY FOR HABITAT INTRODUCTION:

The Aga Khan Agency for Habitat's (AKAH) mission is to create habitats that allow communities to be resilient to disasters, adapt to climate change, and thrive. It works with communities to help them prepare for and respond to natural disasters and the effects of climate change. AKAH also works to expand access to services and opportunities for people to improve their life, whether in a remote mountain village, a small town, or a densely populated urban centre. AKAH helps communities prepare for the worst; provides immediate relief after disaster strikes; and helps build back better – and greener – while planning for a better future. AKAH currently operates in Afghanistan, Tajikistan, Syria, Pakistan, and India, with plans to expand further in Central Asia as well as in East Africa.

PLAN: Understanding Risk

Enabling communities to plan for a resilient future:

- Habitat Assessment & Planning
- Resilient Town Planning
- Risk Anticipation & Modelling

AKAH brings communities together to design a better future, planning how to make their neighbourhoods, villages, and cities safer and create opportunities for future generations. AKAH guides communities and experts through a participatory, data-driven planning, design, and implementation process, addressing current and future land-use needs and climate and natural hazard risk. The resulting Habitat Plan captures a long-term vision and roadmap for what the community aspires to be in the future.

PREPARE: Reducing Risk

Preparing communities to respond to and reduce risk:

- Emergency Response
- Community Preparedness
- Relocation & Resettlement
- Recovery

AKAH works with communities to assess vulnerabilities and protect themselves against the risks they face. AKAH's multi-hazard approach brings together scientific analysis and international best practice with deep community engagement. Its trained local volunteers and technical staff work in over 2,500 communities to make sure people have the knowledge, capacity, and tools to forecast and mitigate risk and respond effectively if disaster strikes.

PROGRESS: Building Resilience

Empowering communities to adapt to change and progress:

- Green & Resilient Construction
- Essential Services: Water, Sanitation, Waste Management
- Resilient Infrastructure
- Climate Change Adaptation

AKAH works with communities to make sure that their homes, schools, hospitals, and critical infrastructure and services are safe, sustainable, and able to withstand climate and disaster risk. AKAH aims to ensure sustainable access to safe drinking water and sanitation for every family, in their home. AKAH promotes safe construction practices and locally adapted, disaster resilient building techniques and designs. AKAH helps communities rethink the ways buildings are designed, constructed, and operated to promote low-carbon and energy and water-efficient practices and materials.

Key Achievements:

• Hazard vulnerability risk assessments for 2,500 settlements covering nearly 3 million people

- Monitor 15 glacial lakes and operate 88 weather monitoring posts covering 600+ avalanche-prone settlements
- Train a network of nearly 40,000 community emergency response volunteers (40% female)
- Built safe water and sanitation systems for 600,000+ people through 1,000+ infrastructure projects maintained by 850+ Operations & Maintenance Committees

• Built 50,000+ family homes and over 5,000 hospitals, schools, and community centres in remote areas integrating natural hazard mitigation and green construction features

• Habit planning in 100+ cities, towns, and villages

For further information, please visit our website.

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew

Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew is a non-departmental public body in the United Kingdom sponsored by the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. An internationally important botanical research and education institution, it employs 1,100 staff. Its board of trustees is chaired by Dame Amelia Fawcett. The organisation manages botanic gardens at Kew in Richmond upon Thames in south-west London, and at Wakehurst.

About Wakehurst and The Garfield Weston Global Tree Seed Bank Programme

Wakehurst is Kew's wild botanic garden in the Sussex High Weald. Its ancient and beautiful landscapes span 535 acres and are a place for escape, exploration, tranquillity, and wonder. Its diverse collection of plants from Britain and around the globe thrive within a tapestry of innovative gardens, temperate woodlands, meadows, and wetlands. Wakehurst is a centre for UK biodiversity and global conservation, seed research and ecosystem science. At its heart is Kew's Millennium Seed Bank, the world's largest store of seeds from wild plant species.

For further information click <u>here</u> or <u>visit their website</u>.

A particular interest we have for our partnership with Kew's Garfield Weston Global Tree Seed Bank Programme is the work they are undertaking in Pakistan. To find out more, click <u>here</u> or <u>visit</u> <u>their website</u>.

ONE RESILENT EARTH

In partnership with One Resilient Earth we plan to host a series of curated 'Climate Circles' that bring a variety of audiences together to discuss, sit with and address climate change and how we can individually and collectively support local and global efforts to help tackle climate change. We will look at a series of these Climate Circles mid-way during the exhibition and invite targeted audiences, so each circle is made up of artists, makers, scientists, environmentalists, thinkers, academics, activists, and pioneers in their field.

One Resilient Earth is a non-profit organization with a mission to grow the resilience of individuals, and regenerate communities and ecosystems in a climate-altered world, by weaving together art, science, ancient wisdom, and new technologies.

Our mission is to grow the resilience of individuals to the impacts of climate change, so that they can retain their agency despite climate instability and are equipped to respond to the crisis through transformation and regeneration.

One Resilient Earth supports innovative cultural, scientific, educational, and community-led projects, that are transdisciplinary and inclusive, so as to develop and share knowledge, tools and methods for resilience-building. We partner with cultural organizations, scientific institutions, international organizations, local civil-society organizations, and others. We enjoy co-designing projects with partners who are open to growing their inner resilience as they engage into the regeneration of communities and/or ecosystems through context-specific initiatives. We mobilize ancient wisdom and modern science, work across disciplines and generations, integrate new technologies when impactful, and value art as a channel for transformation. Lastly, we build

communities of support to grow our inner resilience together.

Our four main areas of work focus on: new questions & inspiration through Tero magazine; local action & global connection through the Tapestry programme for resilient local communities; open dialogues, responsible experimentation & life-long learning through our Resilience Nests; and collaboration for cultural & organizational transformation through our Waves of change programme.

For further information, click here.

Exhibition content, format and learning programme:

The exhibition offers an opportunity to deliver a diverse learning programme aimed at engaging broad audiences. Activities currently being offered include:

Mediative and Thought Circles with One Resilient Earth and Diana Taylor

Curated events with invited audiences from across a range of public and private sectors

Artists Talks: Making Artwork in Response to Climate Change

Artists having the opportunity to share the process of making work for this exhibition and discuss their practice in general. Both live and online.

An Audience with Tony Juniper

Anthony Juniper CBE is a British campaigner, writer, sustainability advisor and environmentalist who served as Executive Director of Friends of the Earth, England, Wales, and Northern Ireland.

Recycle and Reuse Workshops

A series of practical workshops lead by artists and partner organisations.

Climate Change: Making a Documentary Film

Panel discussion with one of the filmmakers and producer of Voices from the Roof of the World Andrew Tkach with Onno Ruhl, General Manager of Aga Khan Agency for Habitat, Aga Khan University representative and One Resilient Earth. Open for public, students, wildlife photographers and documentary filmmakers.

RBG Kew: Global Tree Seed Bank Programme

An opportunity to learn about the incredible work undertaken by Kew's scientists and why this programme is fundamental to the preservation of the world's plant species.

We will also explore learning around AKAH's work in nature-based solutions for disaster risk reduction or green building/greening the built environment. There could be additional learning activities as the project and partnerships begin to grow and develop but some may be developed for a second exhibition around climate change in 2024.

We also have an opportunity to collaborate on education activity with artist Jane Lee McCracken's 'Drawing for the Planet' global project.