

FIVE STEPS TO DISCOVERING NATURE

As part of Tate Liverpool's **Turner, Monet, Twombly** exhibition, the Gallery is working with local communities to engage them with the nature in their neighbourhood. "*Our Liverpool Landscape*", brings together a programme for children and young people and their families, schools and communities that connects the works of these three artists to their own experiences of their environment. **Five steps to discovering nature** is designed to engage children aged 0-11 with these themes in a creative way and can be used by families, nurseries and primary schools anywhere. The resource is divided into 2 sections; teacher/parent notes and a 5 steps guide with a sketchbook page to capture observations.

Artists have always been inspired by nature, going as far back as cave dwellers and their cave paintings. And artists are still inspired by nature today. Wander around almost any art gallery and you will find works of art depicting nature. It's not a surprise really, because we, us humans, are part of nature but, unlike any other living organism, we have evolved in a way that seems to have set us apart from nature. We have built massive cities, with roads and railways connecting them. We live in buildings, we have cars, we watch television, we sit in front of computers; and sometimes it is easy to forget our connection to the natural world.

This on-line resource has been designed to encourage children to explore the hidden natural wonders all about us, and to develop an understanding of the connectedness of nature: us to nature, nature to us, and nature across the cities and neighbourhoods where we live. We can ask: What connects a child and a plant; me and a cloud; a teacher and a seagull? We can also ask: What is the relationship between Twombly and poppies; Turner and the sky; Monet and a water lily?

Created by contemporary environment artist, Kerry Morrison, in collaboration with botanist, Dr Alicia Prowse, and illustrator, Amy Pennington, this creative resource has been designed to help children explore nature around their homes, their school, their neighbourhood - through art and creative writing- and find connections. Childhood bonding with natural places and organisms is an essential key to arousing connectedness and respect for nature. "The natural environment is there to be explored by children, it is their right. The memories they collect from it stay with them as adults and inspire them to pass on a healthy environment for future generations".¹ And you don't have to go to the countryside to explore nature. Nature is everywhere. But sometimes we need to make time to find it; to seek it out, and to be inspired by it. "It is these early years of inspiration that set in motion a life time passion; today's young explorers are tomorrow's naturalists and biologists – if children don't learn how nature works how will they look after it for the future?"²

¹Natural England, 2009

http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20111121191513/http://www.naturalengland.org.uk/about_us/news/2009/020409.aspx

² Chris Packham, TV's *Nature Watch* presenter. *ibid*

Today's young explorers are also tomorrow's artists. When we find nature we can capture it by taking a photograph, drawing a picture, or writing about it. Using the 5-steps guide to find and creatively capture nature on the doorstep, children can individually or collectively create an artwork illustrating the diversity of nature in their neighbourhood. Back home or in the classroom, the drawings, the photographs, and the writing, can be brought together, creating a nature collage; an artwork that is a map of the living things in your school grounds, or your neighbourhood. How these things connect, and how your children connect to them, is open to the interpretation and imagination of the children. A cautionary note: if you go onto a school playing field, or into a near-by park to do this activity, you may need to guide you children away from the obvious, like grass and bushes, and get them to focus in on details, so that they might find spiders, or ants, or lichens.

You can take 5 steps as many times as you like. You won't always find something different, that's not the point. The point is to focus in on how much life your city or neighbourhood supports and to become aware of how alive our surroundings are; to see how nature is integrated into the very fabric of our environment, connected through nature and living organisms. If you, or your children, want to know what you've found, to identify it, you could either use the old- fashioned method of looking it up in an identification book, or, you could log onto www.ispot.org.uk. We'd love to hear about your experiences and what you have discovered. You can share your photos, drawings and poems with us via our Facebook page, by tweeting @tateliverpool or by emailing: visiting.liverpool@tate.org.uk. (Please note that by sending us your images you give permission to use them on Tate's website).

HELPFUL, USEFUL, AND INTERESTING LINKS

<http://www.tate.org.uk/learn/online-resources>

Turner, Monet, Twombly Teachers' Pack

Information on the exhibition and artists with ideas for gallery and classroom activities for KS1-4

<http://www.ispot.org.uk/>

Learn more about wildlife and share your discoveries. An on-line resource that helps you identify what you have seen, from molds and fungus to flowering plants, insects, and mammals. Post your photographs and an expert will help identify what you've discovered.

<http://www.bigwildlifegarden.org.uk/>

Find out about nature in your garden, yard or school grounds and how to develop it as supportive habitat for a rich variety of species.

<https://www.50things.org.uk/>

50 things to do before you're 11 ¾ is a new initiative set up by the National Trust in response to recent research demonstrating that children are becoming disconnected from nature and this is having a massive negative impact on their health and well-being. *50 things to do before you're 11 ¾* is just that: 50 outdoor, exciting, things for children (under the age of 12) to do.

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/what-we-do/news/view-page/item788564/>

"Save children's relationship with the outdoors" A National Trust news bulletin highlighting why we need to take action to ensure our children get hands on with nature. Includes report, *Natural Childhood* by Stephen Moss.