

Learning Resource

John Newling *Dear Nature*
Judy Watson

4 March - 31 May 2020

This set of notes offers educators thematic points of entry to Ikon Gallery's current exhibitions. These notes provide context for artworks and we recommend you read this in conjunction with our exhibition guide. You will also find suggestions for practical workshops in the classroom.



John Newling, *365 days and 50 million year old leaves* (2019)

Judy Watson

I'm interested in cultural memory tied to a place. Judy Watson

Born in Mundubbera, Queensland, Watson derives inspiration from her matrilineal Waanyi heritage, often conveyed through collective memory, using it as a foil for the archival research that informs much of her practice. Recently Watson visited British sites of prehistorical significance including standing stones, circles and hill figures at Stonehenge, Avebury, Uffington and Orkney.

Key words and themes

Aboriginal	Environment
Topography	Activism
Archive	Community

Method

Print Making	Video
Painting	Sculpture

Materials

Natural material – Plants, beeswax, indigo
Acrylic paint
Found objects

Related Artists

Yhonnie Scarce
Gordon Bennett



Installation view, Judy Watson at Ikon Gallery
Birmingham UK, 2020 © Ikon Gallery

Q – What are the benefits of using found objects to create artwork?

Q – Can you use line to suggest “shadowy or very ghostly” forms?

Q – How does history inform contemporary art?

Suggested Practical Response: Experimental Print

Watson finds inspiration in places of historical significance. She then uses experimental process to create her works.

Find an image of a landmark that is significant to you. Cut it out and use it as a stencil. Use paint, ink, dry pigments, charcoal, or markers to leave an impression on the page. Remove your stencil to reveal a negative space.

Experiment with different application tools. Try using scrap fabric to apply paint, or smudging pigments with your fingers.

Artist Interview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrbz5Sl6Abs>

Exhibition Walkthrough

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hI6x-Z8TSqYU>

Complimentary Resources

Links to interactive articles, and video resources suggested by Judy Watson.



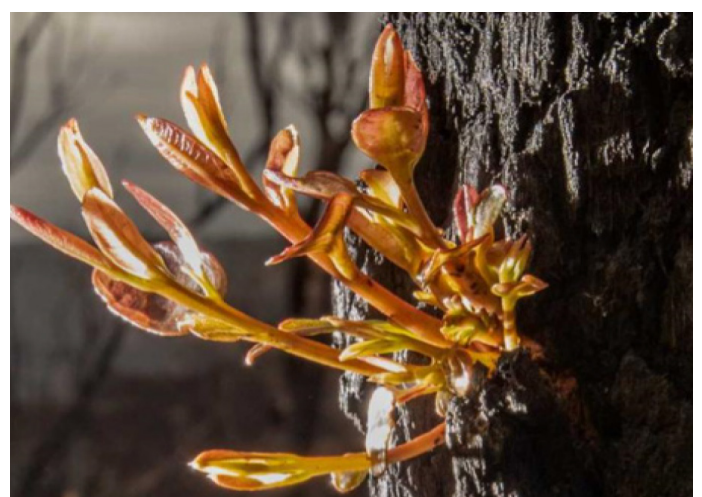
[Climate Change, Decolonization, and Ways of Seeing](#)



[Sleep Australia Sleep by Paul Kelly](#)



[Infrared images have revealed how heat and drought turned Australia into a tinderbox](#)



[Bushfire black turns green as the Australian bush wakes up](#)

John Newling

I have worked on many projects that review my co-relationship to a natural ecology starting through the agency of growing a specific plant or plants. John Newling

John Newling (b. 1952, Birmingham) is a pioneer of public art with a social purpose. This major exhibition exemplifies his strong environmental proposition, and interest in physical transformation. Newling's plea for a closer connection with, and greater understanding of, the natural world is evident in his 2016 development of a new alphabet based on leaves he found at Nymans, a National Trust garden in West Sussex. It also exists as an officially registered downloadable font.

Key words and themes

Environment	Economy
Horticulture	Ecology
Transformation	Anthropocene

Method

Pressing
Sculpture
Photography

Materials

Natural material – Leaves, soil, sticks
Copper leaf
Paint

Related Artists

Giuseppe Penone
Jannis Kounellis
Robert Smithson



John Newling, *Eliot's Note Books* (2017)

Q – Newling works in “slow time”. What do you think this means?

Q – Can you make works showing the variety of forms of one plant?

Q – How can we use free resources to make valuable works?

Suggested Practical Response: Reverse Process Letter

Practice a cyclical process by using old letters to create a new one.

1. Collect some junk mail and tear them into small pieces.
2. Soak your paper in warm water for an hour.
3. Use the pulse setting on your blender to make a pulp.
4. Pour your pulp into a large bowl and mix in seeds with a spoon.
5. Submerge your splash screen in the bowl and lift it out slowly.
6. Firmly press the back of your spoon over the top of the pulp to get rid of excess water.
7. Leave your paper to air dry. It may take up to 2 days.
8. Write a letter to a friend. They can plant your letter once they have read it!

Artist Interview

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aLQWAWOtP8Q>

Exhibition Walkthrough

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1DDLZfZGtsI>

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