

Kristina Veasey and Alejandro Ahmed:
Capturing the Forest
Audio Description Transcript



Welcome to *Capturing the Forest*. Come and take a walk with me. The first space we're walking into is a clearing. It's lit. In the centre of it, is a four poster bed. Growing out of each post, are branches, stretching across the space. Ivy is wound around them. On the bed, there are fabrics, tumbling and winding off the bed, almost like organic creatures. Each of the fabrics are printed in a different pattern, made from images of very colourful lichen. They spill onto the floor amongst fallen leaves.

To the side is a bedside table. It too has been taken over by plant life. The standing lamp next to it has transformed into a curving ebonised branch. The light bulb hangs from it. This is the liminal space between domesticity and rurality. Has the forest taken over the bedroom? Or is the bedroom becoming forest?

We're going to leave this clearing now, and head over to clearing number 2. Lit in the centre of this clearing is a sculpture. It's been named *Precairity*. It consists of a limestone rock, and sitting on that is a slice of ebonised tree trunk, a hole through its centre. There is a motor fitted to the top of it. On top of the motor, very carefully, is balanced a small branch. This branch is rotating. Surrounding the sculpture are 2 circles of small ceramic organic forms. They give an other worldly feel to the room, and encircling those ceramic sculptures are fallen leaves.

This piece has been inspired by both the artists experience of disability and finding it difficult to navigate the outside terrain. With every step they take, they have to check for level ground so that they don't stumble or fall. With this sculpture, the very fine balance and the eco system that's created between the point of balance, the forest material, and the kinetic energy. Feel the synergy.

Behind *Precairity* is another clearing. This is an activity clearing. Here, audiences are invited to make dorodango clay balls and to explore the wild clays that Kristina has found in the local area.

We're leaving that clearing now, and we're walking over towards some very large silks that are draped from branches and hanging 5 metres in the air. Each of these silks has been dyed with a natural dye made from foliage from the forest. In front of me is a yellow one, dyed with buddleja. To the left are rose gold one, dyed with bramble roots. The one to the rear is a golden oatmeal colour, dyed with rose hips. And there is another really long silk here, fluttering in the breeze. It's a green colour, and this one was dyed with ivy. There's movement in all the silks. You wonder how you might capture a forest breeze and share it with others more remotely. But these silks give a visual interpretation of that breeze.

To the side is an arrangement of Cotswolds rocks. Ivy streams down from between them. Sitting on the top rock is a ceramic piece. It's made from black clay and it's shiny. Spotted around the black clay is marine clay, dug from a prehistoric forest submerged under the water at Saint Leonards. It's very rough in texture, and contrasts nicely with the shiny glaze. There is a tap at the bottom of this ceramic vessel and it is dripping water. Each drop falls into a small plate beneath it, resting on other rocks. The sound is amplified. It is the heartbeat of the forest, the forest's lifeblood.

As we leave this clearing, we approach dappled light on the floor. We are entering a forest area, although it is a mysterious forest, and in it are 3 teepees. The far teepee is empty, and invites you to go inside. There's room for several small children to sit and peer out into the other-worldly forest. Next to it, within the teepee, a film is showing of a fallow deer grazing. Alongside that, is a teepee that houses a small yellow monkey with a black head. It's a black-capped squirrel monkey from Brazil. He's going about his monkey business.

The image in the central teepee has now changed. The artist Kristina Veasey is sitting cross legged within it. She is forest bathing. She sits peacefully, the wind blowing in her hair, examining blades of grass and small twigs. Overhead, we hear bird song. It fills the space.

A new sound has entered the clearing. It is the voice of the artist instructing us in a forest bathing exercise. In the teepee to the left, a BSL interpreter is translating the words. There is a space filled with cushions for people to relax on, and follow the exercise. It's an exercise in imagination, creating your own imaginary forest, examining the differing sensorial aspects of it. Some of these cushions are covered in a velvet texture. It's a fabric that's been printed with pictures of lichen, much like the bed across the room.

Climbing the walls beside the teepee is a shadow forest. There is a pile of leaves with branches rising up out of them. Draped from the branches is sheep's wool. This is from sheep that roam freely in the Forest of Dean. Together we have animal and vegetable. Lights are shining through them to cast shadows that have a mysterious feel to them.

We're going to leave this clearing now. We're heading to a new clearing, and in the centre of it is a plinth. There is a curved steamed wood sculpture. It has been ebonised. It's very curly in appearance and balanced on some of these curves are dorodango. These are Japanese mud balls.

In Japan, children take mud from the ground, shape them into a ball, and then polish them. They can achieve quite a shine, and you can see the different colours of the elements from the ground within them. This piece is called *A Delicate Balance*, and it's inspired by the balance that we need to keep with nature: managing forests, looking after them, making sure that our behaviour is sustainable for future generations to enjoy the forest.

To the right, is a very low plinth. It's a rectangle shape, and it's draped with a white cloth. From directly above, a film is being projected onto the white plinth. The artist Kristina Veasey is doing a performative piece. Her skin is covered in a strange second skin, made of clay and sheep's wool. It's almost like lichen in appearance. She has morphed into the forest floor. It has taken over her body. She is forest.

To the side of this, is another sculptural piece. Small fragments of this second skin are hanging on invisible thread at different heights. They are suspended above a pile of autumn leaves. As we view them, we can see through some of the elements. We can see how fine and delicate and fragile this material is, just like our relationship with the forest.

We are now taking a route towards the exit, but before we leave we step inside the archive room. Here, is revealed to us some of the processes and development work that Kristina engaged in

before making this installation. To the left is an easel. On the easel is a painting of silver birch bark. This has been painted with natural paints, made from foliage in the forest. There's a table to the rear. On it are different sketches. There are also pots of the natural paint, and small prototype ceramic pieces.

To one side, there is a box, and inside this box there is scented potpourri. It smells like the earthy forest floor. There is bag of wild clay, and some moss on one of the ceramic pieces that surround Precarity. It is a Forest Connection Kit, and it has been sent out to participants who cannot otherwise visit the forest in person, as a way for them to connect.

To the right side of the room, is a screen and two chairs. Here, audiences are invited to view some of the videos Kristina has made during her forest journey.

So this is the end of our little tour around Capturing the Forest, but I hope you will take some of the forest with you, and reconnect in your own time.