



## Modern Nature

### **Dr Dawn Woolley 52m Building Wrap**

In 2019 Woolley was commissioned by The Hepworth Wakefield and Wakefield Council to produce a building wrap design in response to the Modern Nature exhibition at The Hepworth. Woolley worked with members of the local community, including The Hepworth's Art Social group (for young people not in education, employment or training) and students from Wakefield Adult Education centre, to produce a design that references the history and function of the historic Upper Mill building and the development of neighbouring land into a community garden.

### **Participatory Workshop Synopsis**

In 'Ideas of Nature' Raymond Williams notes that, since the agricultural and industrial revolutions in the 18th and 19th centuries, nature has been consumed as a source of raw materials and a form of leisure. He writes: '[t]here is more similarity than we usually recognise between the industrial entrepreneur and the landscape gardener, each altering nature to a consumable form' and he goes on to observe that the landowner who benefitted from the landscaper's work was also often a mill or factory owner (1980, p. 81).

The blurred distinction between nature and industry is explored in the Modern Nature exhibition, using photographs that show how urban and rural landscapes merge. The exhibition text says: '[f]or the first time in human history, more of us are living in urban environments than in the countryside. Yet our impulse to nurture and seek out nature remains as strong as ever' (The Hepworth, 2018).

Industry means both industrious (a sustained effort) and industrial (institutions for production or trade). For example, industry once marked the distinction between cultivated (industrial) and natural fruits (Williams, 1986). In this sense a cultivated garden could be described as industrially produced. In addition to this, the term nature is often used in contrast to 'manmade' things, but again the designed landscape favoured in the 18th and 19th centuries, along with agricultural innovations such as the selective breeding of animals

and plants, further blurred the boundary between natural and industrial products. Nature could be a product of cultivation and industry.

The term culture has also changed over time: It originally meant to inhabit, cultivate, or protect, and by the early fifteenth century this primarily referred to agricultural cultivation. From the early 16th century culture also signified a process of human development. Today, it commonly refers to intellectual and artistic works and practices (Williams, 1986). We also now talk about high culture, such as sculpture, in contrast to low culture, such as adverts and packaging design. An ornamental garden is considered to be high culture while farming and folk traditions are considered to be low culture.

Bringing together both aspects of 'consumable nature' described by Williams, the evolving meanings of nature, culture and industry, and the merged landscapes of the Modern Nature exhibition, Woolley worked with local communities to produce a 2-D design that references the history and function of the location.

Upper Mill, first constructed in the 13th century, is historically significant due to its 'continuous use and alteration' of waterpower in a range of industries including agriculture and textiles (*Conservation Plan: Upper Mill*, 2016, p. 44). Furthermore, by the eighteenth century Wakefield was the most important grain market in Northern England and Upper Mill contributed to this reputation because corn and barley were milled there.

Through the construction of flower, corn and barley sculptures made out of recycled material such as plastic bags and cardboard boxes, participants considered the blurred boundaries between nature and man-made materials, from the early industrial processes of corn grinding and cultivated landscapes to the impact of consumer culture on the environment today. Simultaneously, the sculptures are objects of nature, high and low culture, and industry.

The sculptures were photographed and arranged in a composite design that was printed onto the Upper Mill building wrap. Photographs of the sculptures were also posted on Instagram ([https://www.instagram.com/consumer\\_relics/](https://www.instagram.com/consumer_relics/)).

Denise Jeffery, Cabinet Member for Economic Growth and Regeneration at Wakefield Council, said: 'The specially designed building wraps have proven to be an effective method of ensuring the continuing preservation of this important listed building. This new cover will not only continue to protect the watermill but with the addition of this thoughtful and imaginative design, created in part by local communities, will make a positive contribution to the conservation area.' quoted in Sarah Hall, *The Wakefield Express*, 6th June 2019) (<https://www.wakefieldexpress.co.uk/lifestyle/wakefield-s-history-to-get-covered-by-artist-1-9808777>).

Rachel Craddock, Communities Manager at The Hepworth Wakefield said: 'it is important to acknowledge and preserve the industrial heritage that Wakefield waterfront is steeped in. This project is an excellent opportunity to merge the old with the new. We are extremely grateful to Wakefield Council for providing the funds to allow Dawn to create a cover that is inspiring and lets the creativity of Wakefield be seen.' (<https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/Pages/PR-9068.aspx>)

### **Bibliography**

*Conservation Plan: Upper Mill, Wakefield Waterfront, West Yorkshire* March 2016.

The Hepworth Art Gallery. *Modern Nature* [exhibition] 13 July 2018 - 2 June 2019.

Williams, Raymond. *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, 2nd edn. London, Fontana Press, 1986.

Williams, Raymond. 'Ideas of Nature' (based on a lecture given in the Institute of Contemporary Arts, 1971), in *Culture and Materialism*, London: Verso, 1980.

### **Press Releases**

The Hepworth Wakefield

<https://hepworthwakefield.org/news/new-cover-for-historic-watermill-on-the-hepworth-wakefield-site/>

Wakefield Council

<https://www.wakefield.gov.uk/Pages/PR-9068.aspx>

### **Press Coverage**

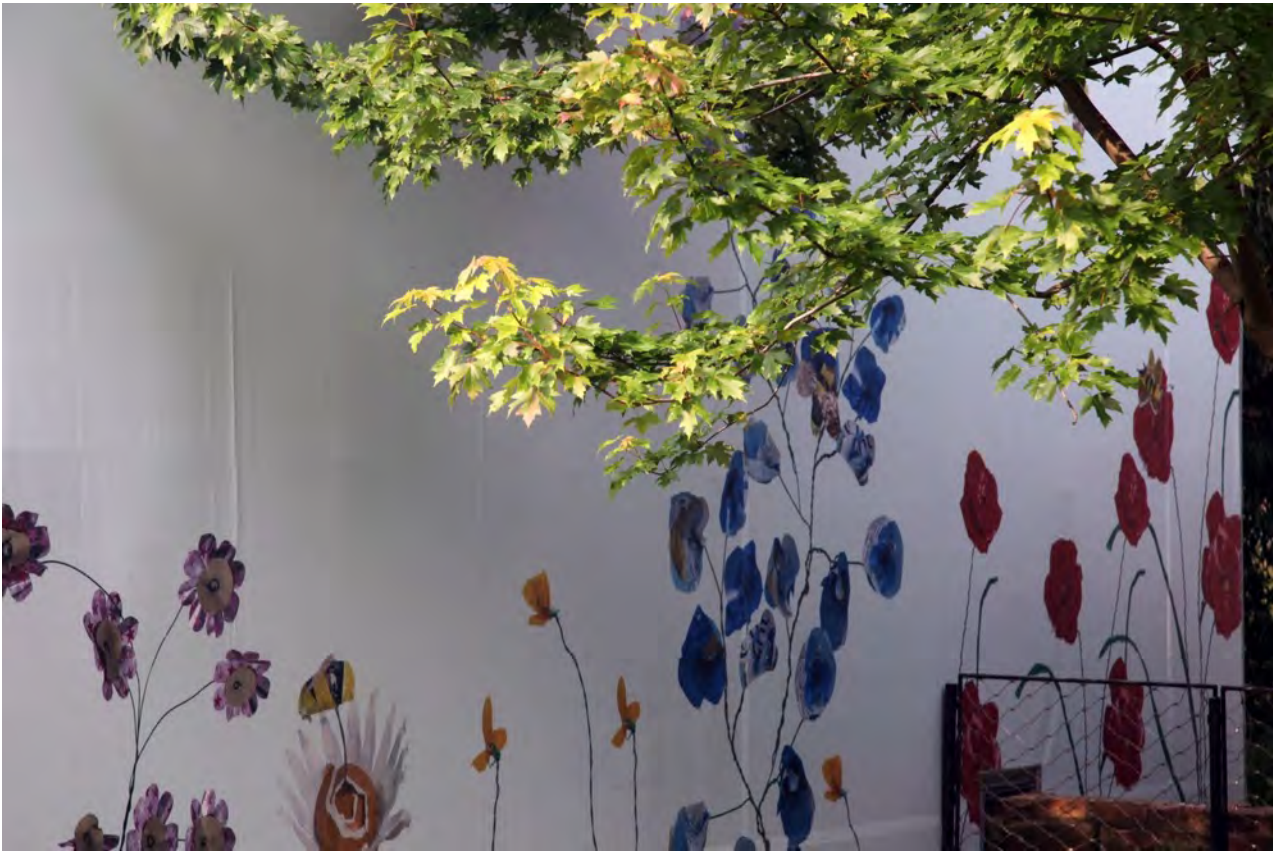
Sarah Hall, 'Wakefield's history to get covered by artist,' Wakefield Express, 6th June 2019, <https://www.wakefieldexpress.co.uk/lifestyle/wakefield-s-history-to-get-covered-by-artist-1-9808777>

Unknown Author, 'Council Class Gets Visit from Hepworth Artist,' Bradford Zone, 12th June 2019, <https://www.bradfordzone.co.uk/council-class-gets-visit-from-hepworth-artist/>

Installation Images











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hepworthwakefield A nineteenth century watermill situated opposite The Hepworth Wakefield is to be protected with a new building cover designed by artist Dawn Woolley and community groups from across the district. Commissioned by The Hepworth Wakefield and funded by Wakefield Council, the artwork has been designed and produced to continue preserving the historic listed mill.

Yorkshire-based artist Dawn Woolley, who is currently working as an engagement artist with @ysi\_2019, was selected for her proposal which considered the merging of historical context, environment and nature. A particular focus was on the

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Yorkshire-based artist Dawn Woolley, who is currently working as an engagement artist with @ysi\_2019, was selected for her proposal which considered the merging of historical context, environment and nature. A particular focus was on the development of the wider site, including The Hepworth Wakefield Garden.

#hepworth #hepworthwakefield #thehepworthwakefield #watermill #mills #rutlandmills #rivercalder #calder #nature #natural #flowers #enviroment #art #contemporaryart #photography #architecture #watermills #river #rivers #wakefield #yorkshire

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Dawn Woolley

Workshops that consider the environmental impact of consumption and critically interpret brands, packaging, and advertising texts.

[www.dawnwoolley.com/relics.html](http://www.dawnwoolley.com/relics.html)



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Hepworth ...



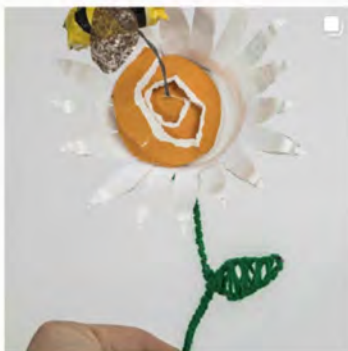
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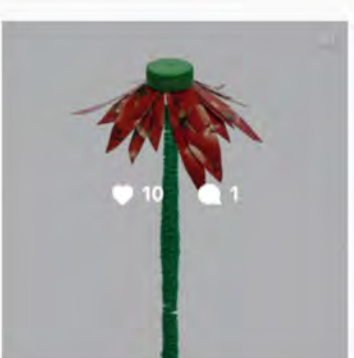
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**consumer\_relics** More sculpture envy caused by a student at Wakefield Adult Education Centre and @hepworthwakefield #modernnatureexhibition #hepworthcommunitygarden #uppermillwakefield

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**consumer\_relics** ...

**consumer\_relics** Recycled sculpture made during @hepworthwakefield workshop with the City and Guild's Art and Design course at Wakefield Adult Education Centre #recycledsculpture #modernnatureexhibition #hepworthcommunitygarden #savethebees 🐝 #weneedbees #beesneedflowers

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