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## Connected Worlds

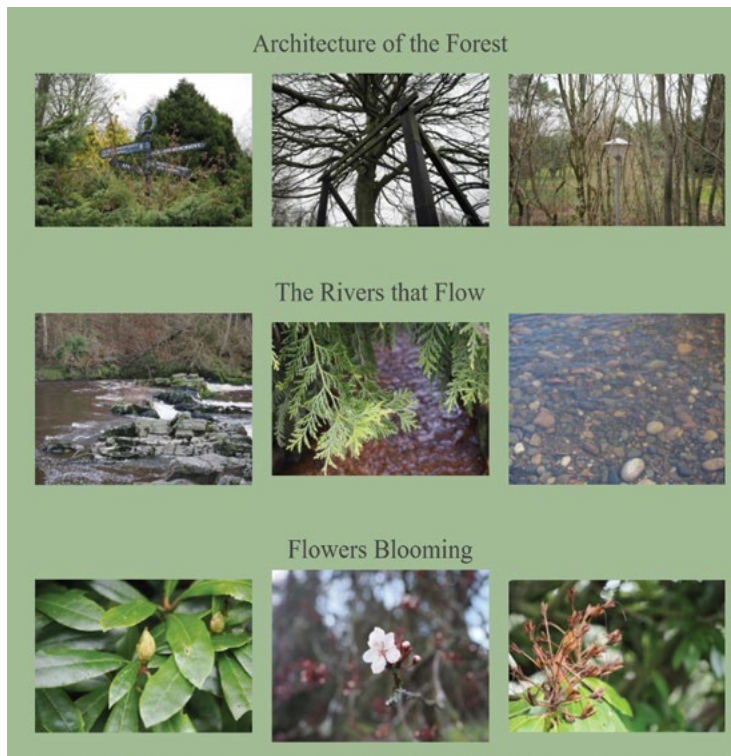
Having the opportunity to dive deeply into a forest environment has been an excellent creative experience. Through LiLa, I have come to understand and embrace many parts of the environment to which I am so closely connected. In this essay, I would like to give insight into a topic I have only now considered: the connection between our senses and sense in context with a forest space and the natural world as a whole:



“A purely interpretive view of creativity will be concerned primarily with the experiences of the individual” (Taylor & Callahan, 2005). This quote, I feel, expresses the need to explore elements outside the scope of our self and emotions, to improve our creative approaches. Focusing on what individuals bring with them, we can lessen the impact that the environment and other factors have on artworks.



*Figure 1. The rough, textured terrain that sits so still is ideal for drawing shapes and lines from and exploring the depth of the scene.  
Figure 2. Small hideaways by the river, enjoyed only by the few who will go and find them. Images: Aidan Andrew, 2023.*



*Figure 3. A collection of photos representing sounds and elements present throughout the forest around me. Image: Aidan Andrew, 2023.*

As a visual artist, I have always used the natural world for inspiration, whether direct or from abstraction, but this has only been utilising my sight, or so I thought. A forest study into analysing the sounds that texture the soundscape of the forest, had me finding words that can connect the audible and visual worlds. Texture as an umbrella term encompasses terms such as dry or wet, rough or smooth. Dry, for example, has visual connections that are well understood, but through audio, we can hear the dryness of the crunch below our steps, the light rustling in the bushes and foliage, or the stillness of the wind. Describing this already creates images that can

be portrayed in the visual medium (Torell, 2017), tapping into our senses to share a world that is totally derived from our imagination and creativity (Carlson, 2005).

While journeying in a forest, we are constantly surrounded by nature, but we are often unaware of the creation process happening there. The space around us is filled with movement and life, and we are amongst it all to feel this for ourselves. There is, however, a disconnect: The world that we can explore freely is distanced from the worlds that many of us have experienced, the digital world, and the world we saw as a child.

Beginning with the digital world, we live at a technology-rich point in time where there is no shortage of entry points to this fictional realm that exists outside the natural world. Digital technology paves the way for interactive design and creativity (Sharp et al., 2019). Knowing this, we should not shy away from the utility it provides by connecting our worlds. Through games and movies, our imagination and love for the magical and mystical have grown, often showing lands like our own but distinct and different enough that we cannot truly understand or relate to them. Escapism is a rich topic that is full of benefits to us. However, there can be negative impacts on our mental health if we disconnect ourselves too much from the natural world (Fort Behavioral Health, 2021). The benefit of this fictional world is that we can experience and, more importantly, be inspired by things that can influence future creative endeavours.

Moving on to considering a world that does not have a physical disconnect as much as it is disconnected by time is the world we see through the eyes of a child. As a child growing up, we do not yet know the extent of the

world around us; every new experience in nature is vivid and inspiring. These experiences are ultimately a journey into discovery; our senses are finding new delights in the places around us (Carlson, 2005). Equally, as we discover, we experience that which we do not yet understand. With our limited understanding of the areas around us, we can only use our creative imagination to paint a picture of what these areas might actually be.

As an adult, trying to capture the idea of unknowing can be difficult. We know to a degree the limits of our natural world, thus limiting the inspiration we can draw from the world as we see it (WWF-UK, 2021). Utilising all our senses and not exclusively our sight, we can somewhat reclaim our highly active childhood imagination. We do not naturally disconnect what we see from what we hear, smell or feel around us. Having a deeper

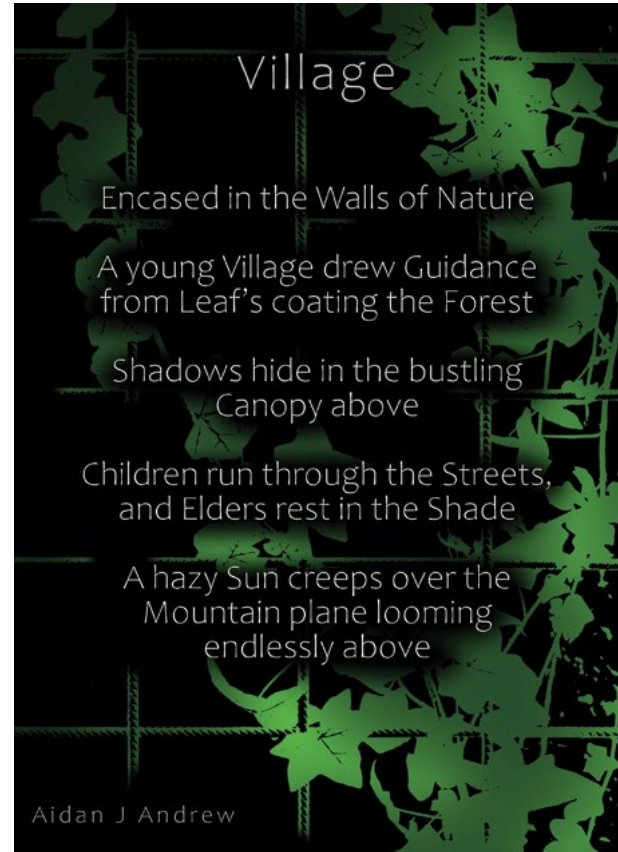
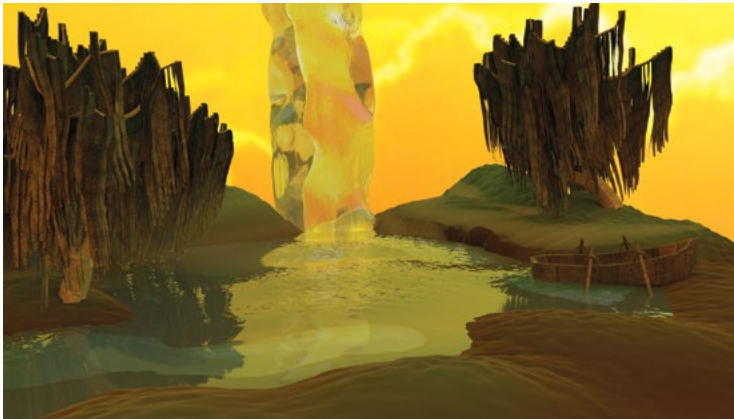


Figure 4. A piece titled *Comforting Crossroads* was created as a digital 3D environment. I wanted to include several details in the scene that reflect different elements of a forest atmosphere. The inspiration for this work was to capture the childlike joy of the imagination and exploration we find in nature. Figure 5. A scene representing the dream-like essence that forests and rivers hold. Figure 6. An example of the forest environment inspiring me to explore different mediums to express the concepts I find while there. Images: Aidan Andrew, 2023.

divine into a surrounding forest, we can build bridges between the world we know now and the imaginary world we once knew, ironically from not fully knowing.

Our sense of place is an important concept; we can enhance our understanding and creativity by better utilising our taskspace (Ingold, 1993). The places in which we find ourselves often impact us in ways that are not always obvious. If we know why these places impact us the way they do, and observe our headspace while in these areas, connections can be created between our physical and mental places.

Finally, I want to discuss the importance of these disconnects in my work for LiLa. I created a piece, Com-



Figure 8. A corner in the woods that some have found peace within, enjoying the elements while they rest. Image: Aidan Andrew, 2023.

forting Crossroads, which showcases a digital world that contains assets that symbolise parts of the natural world, such as the elements of wind and water, and connecting them to notions of discovery and retreat. I actively brought what I learnt from exploring the forest and discovering its details into co-creating these artworks alongside the natural world (Torell, 2017).

Creating bridges, bringing the joys and mystique of fantasy worlds that we long for to the worlds in which we all live, is an extremely important yet difficult task. If we can utilise our senses and sense of place, we can continue to draw from these worlds, maintaining a world full of rich creativity.

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