

## Wider application

Community arts can offer local groups the opportunity to be actively involved in almost any project. They can span all generations and cultures and provide opportunities for communities to work together in a stimulating, creative and rewarding way. The finished artwork can serve to express the reaction of local people to their local environment, whilst also providing features of lasting interest in the landscape.

## Further information

### National Urban Forestry Unit

This leaflet is one of a series produced by the National Urban Forestry Unit. NUFU provides a national focus for the exchange of information and good practice in urban forestry.

If you would like further information, or if you have examples of good practice to share with others, please contact:

<b>National Urban Forestry Unit</b>	<b>Tel :</b>	<b>01902 828600</b>
<b>The Science Park</b>	<b>Fax :</b>	<b>01902 828700</b>
<b>Stafford Road</b>	<b>E-mail :</b>	<b>info@nufu.org.uk</b>
<b>Wolverhampton WV10 9RT</b>	<b>Web site :</b>	<b>www.nufu.org.uk</b>
<b>United Kingdom</b>		

### Groundwork Changing Places Programme

Groundwork is one of the UK's leading environmental partnership organisations. *Changing Places* is Groundwork's millennium initiative. It aims to regenerate more than 1000 ha of derelict and neglected land. In 1995, the programme was awarded £22.1 million by the Millennium Commission to develop 21 selected sites.

<b>Groundwork UK</b>	<b>Tel :</b>	<b>0121 236 8565</b>
<b>85-87 Cornwall Street</b>	<b>Fax :</b>	<b>0121 236 7356</b>
<b>Birmingham</b>	<b>E-mail :</b>	<b>info@groundwork.org.uk</b>
<b>B3 3BY</b>	<b>Web site :</b>	<b>www.groundwork.org.uk</b>

### Landscape & Art Network

The Landscape & Art Network unites professionals and others concerned with the quality of the urban and natural environment. The network acts as a platform for the exchange of ideas by organising regular meetings, events and study tours. Contact: Francis Carr, tel 0208 675 5694.

### Further reading

**Davies P, Knipe T (eds) (1984)**

***A Sense of Place: Sculpture in the Landscape* Ceolfrith Press, Sunderland**

**Goldsworthy A (1990)**

***Hand to Earth: Andy Goldsworthy* Henry Moore Centre for the Study of Sculpture, Leeds, England**

**Goldsworthy A (1995)**

***Wood* Harry N Abrams Inc, New York**

**Jacobs K (1999)**

***Holly Street Estate: Blueprint for Success* Design Works, London Borough of Hackney**

*Photographs: Groundwork Blackburn*

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# Urban Forestry in Practice

## Art as an aid to community participation



CASE STUDY 22

# Art as an aid to community participation

## Introduction

Community commitment is one of the most important elements of a successful project. Arts projects provide opportunities for communities to participate, be creative and have fun.

A wide range of arts based projects can be used including sculpture (temporary or permanent) film and video, drama, photography, poetry and music, and in the process, local people can design and produce site furniture such as seating, litter bins, gateways and signs.

## Specific example

### Project name and location

**ART OF TIME AND PLACE,**  
RIVER DARWEN PARKWAY and  
HIGHER CROFT WOODS, **BLACKBURN**, UK  
*Grid reference SD 682 254*

### Project partners

- Groundwork Blackburn
- North West Water
- The National Lottery through The Millennium Commission
- Environment Agency
- Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council
- Lancashire County Council
- Groundwork UK
- Youth Works
- English Partnerships
- Local schools and community groups

### Project objectives

- To use derelict land to create a popular resource for local communities
- To engage a wide variety of local people with the project, by using community arts
- To produce robust and stimulating pieces of sculpture for the site

### Site description

The 55 ha site lies two miles south of Blackburn town centre on the north bank of the River Darwen. 1970s council housing, Victorian terraces and new private housing estates surround the site.

It has been used in the past for sand extraction, quarrying, railway sidings, engine sheds and farming. Since the last of the commercial activities ceased in the 1970s natural colonisation has created a valuable wildlife haven with a number of different habitats including woodland, grassland, marsh, ponds, scrub and heath.

### Consultation

A community liaison officer was employed by Groundwork to consult with local people about the site and its possible future use.

A community arts programme was developed in order to maintain the interest and involvement of local people and to increase the attractiveness of the site, during development and after physical works were complete.



*Community designed signposts at each entrance set the image for the park*

## Implementation

A pilot arts project was launched during the summer of 1996, aimed primarily at local young people. The project involved the carving of some simple giant mushrooms and a series of carved seats featuring images of insects and animals, all from logs from a local park.

Following a favourable response to the pilot project, a four-year arts programme, entitled *Art of Time and Place*, created 21 pieces of sculpture, each linked with a time capsule.

Initial involvement was mainly aimed at groups and schools that were in the immediate vicinity of the site. It was felt that by getting them involved at the beginning, the artwork would stand a better chance of survival. Specialist community artists were put in direct contact with the local groups and schools and meetings took place to formulate ideas, develop briefs and arrange workshops. Individual groups each worked to produce their own interpretation of the general theme *Time and Place*.

The site for each of the pieces was agreed between the artist, the group, Groundwork Blackburn and the local authority which owned the land. The majority of pieces were located near to where the participants lived or to the school that was involved. Some were in high profile locations, whilst others were hidden in the landscape.

*Art of Time and Place* sculptures include:

- A variety of different carved timber seats
- Giant mushrooms
- Sculpted figures, including a Blackburn Rovers footballer
- Carved stone boulders and panels
- A derelict living room cast in concrete
- Willow weaving - seats and a giant leaf
- Cast iron seed and stone mould
- Giant tree seeds and dandelion seed heads
- Sundial

Steel marker posts were installed at all main entrance points. These featured images taken from drawings by local school children which reflected their own interpretation of the site.

## Results

Through Groundwork's *Changing Places* programme, arts projects have helped to develop the site as an exciting recreational and educational resource for the residents of Blackburn. Early participation through community arts has encouraged local residents and school children to continue their involvement by planting hundreds of new trees and hedge plants across the site.

## Management

Blackburn with Darwen Borough Council has formed a network of Park Supporters Groups. One of which will be set up, with help from Groundwork Blackburn, to monitor activity on the site and help ensure care of the artwork.

In order to maintain and enhance the present diversity of plants and animals, a detailed management plan has been drawn up and it is proposed that the site be designated a Local Nature Reserve.

*It is important for people to see artists working in the landscape - and of course it's always fun to help*

