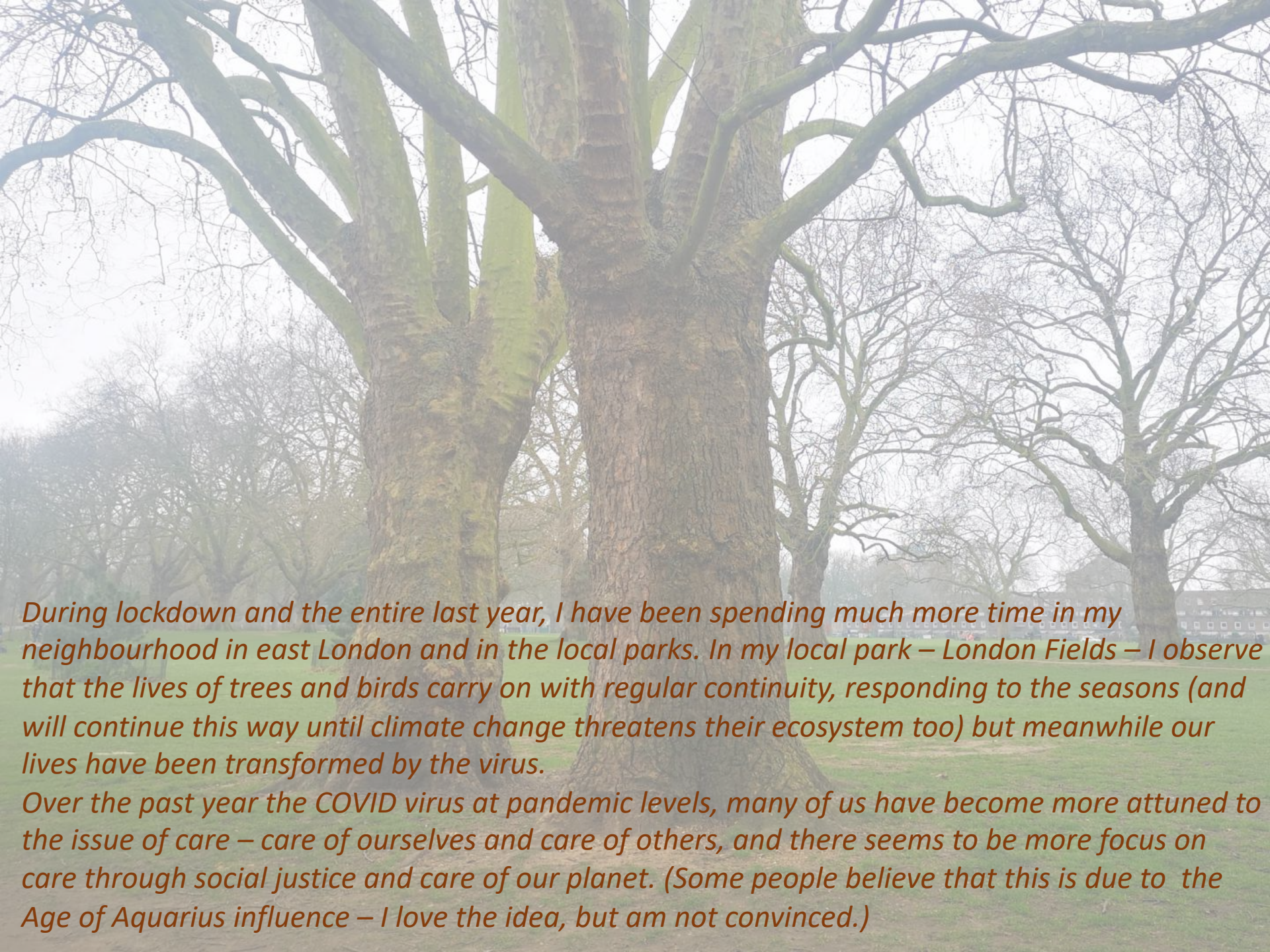


# Trees Talk



London Fields January 2021



*During lockdown and the entire last year, I have been spending much more time in my neighbourhood in east London and in the local parks. In my local park – London Fields – I observe that the lives of trees and birds carry on with regular continuity, responding to the seasons (and will continue this way until climate change threatens their ecosystem too) but meanwhile our lives have been transformed by the virus.*

*Over the past year the COVID virus at pandemic levels, many of us have become more attuned to the issue of care – care of ourselves and care of others, and there seems to be more focus on care through social justice and care of our planet. (Some people believe that this is due to the Age of Aquarius influence – I love the idea, but am not convinced.)*

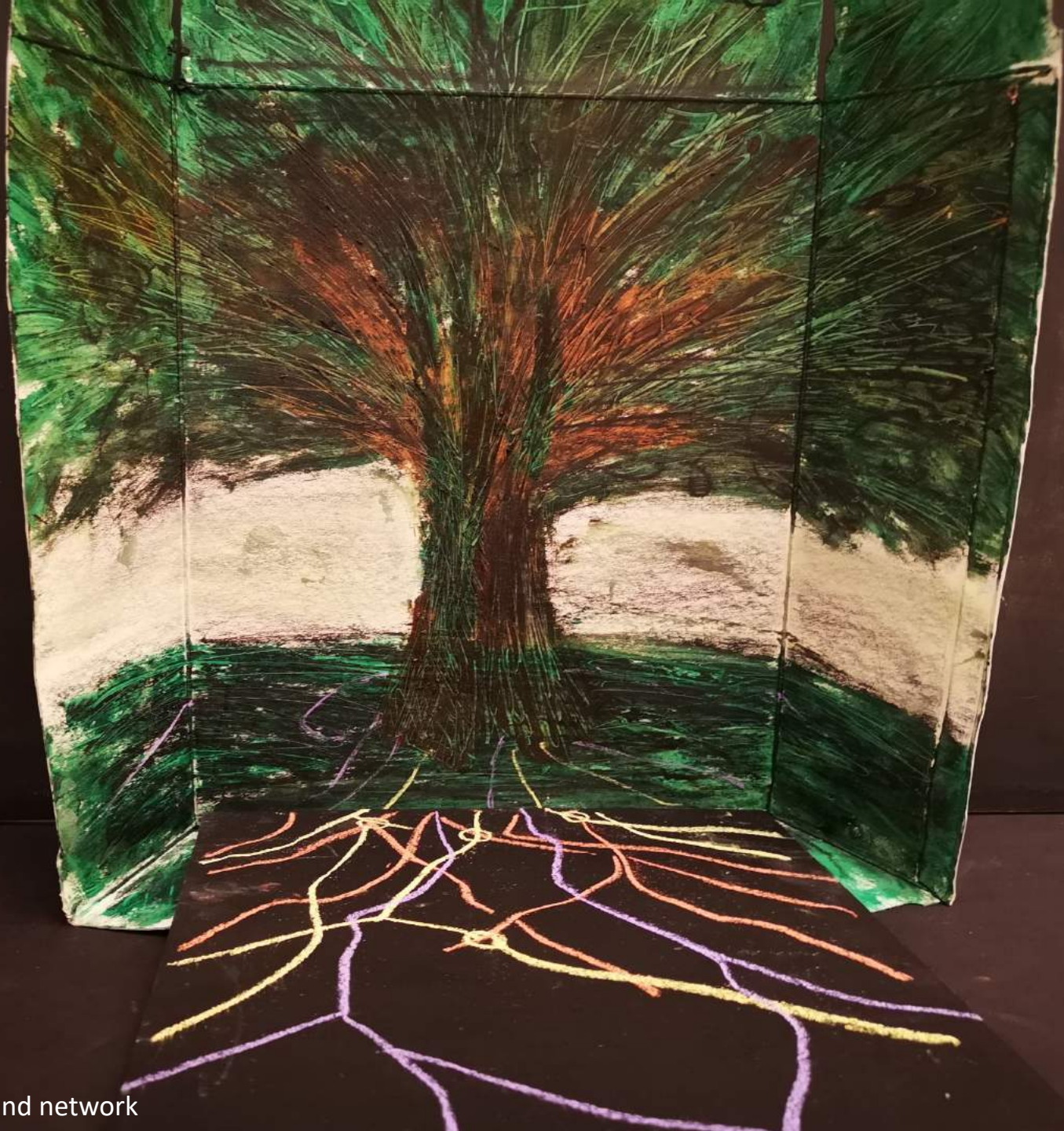


*However we can promote an Age of Aquarius transformation!  
The systems of selfcare of trees for each other is an inspiration: invisible networks situated below ground connect trees with a complex system of communication and mutual support. The trees' system exchanges nourishment between trees, offers resources to trees who need it. Only the occasional tree type uses the network for malevolent purposes (black walnut tree being one) – otherwise the system is self regulating and self supporting.*



*Can we deepen our relationship with trees and with nature, and reinforce our commitment to protecting the planet by “tuning in” to this powerful life giving support network?  
Can this tuning in offer us inspiration – for the times we face in re-engaging with our own communities - in closer proximity face to face, once our lives in lockdown expand outwards?*





Tree and underground network

**Proposal submitted for the  
London Festival of Architecture  
in June 2021**

**“Trees Talk**

If trees are speaking with each other, what are they saying?

Join us for a participatory performance as we explore the ways that trees inter-relate and communicate, as they share resources and offer protection for each other.

This event will take place outdoors amongst the ancient trees in London Fields, where a small group of participants / audience members will be able to enact and re-create fragments of the trees' hidden underground landscape of communication, with artists Bettina Fung and Catherine Harrington acting as guides and performers.”

**Idea 1** – the artists collaboratively move across, around and over each other to wrap coloured rope around trees





**Trees Talk (idea 2)** Participants are invited to trace out on the ground, with the use of coloured streamers, fragments of the unseen underground network that enables these trees to communicate with each other



With voices intertwined and overlapping, and while moving through the group of participants, the two artists together speak about the language of trees, and tell the story of the trees' hidden life.





after being written  
by other participants

Once the network is mapped, participants are invited to walk along the new paths of this web of communication. When passing other participants, they repeat fragments of messages they were provided with at the outset of the performance.

## X Proposed site location

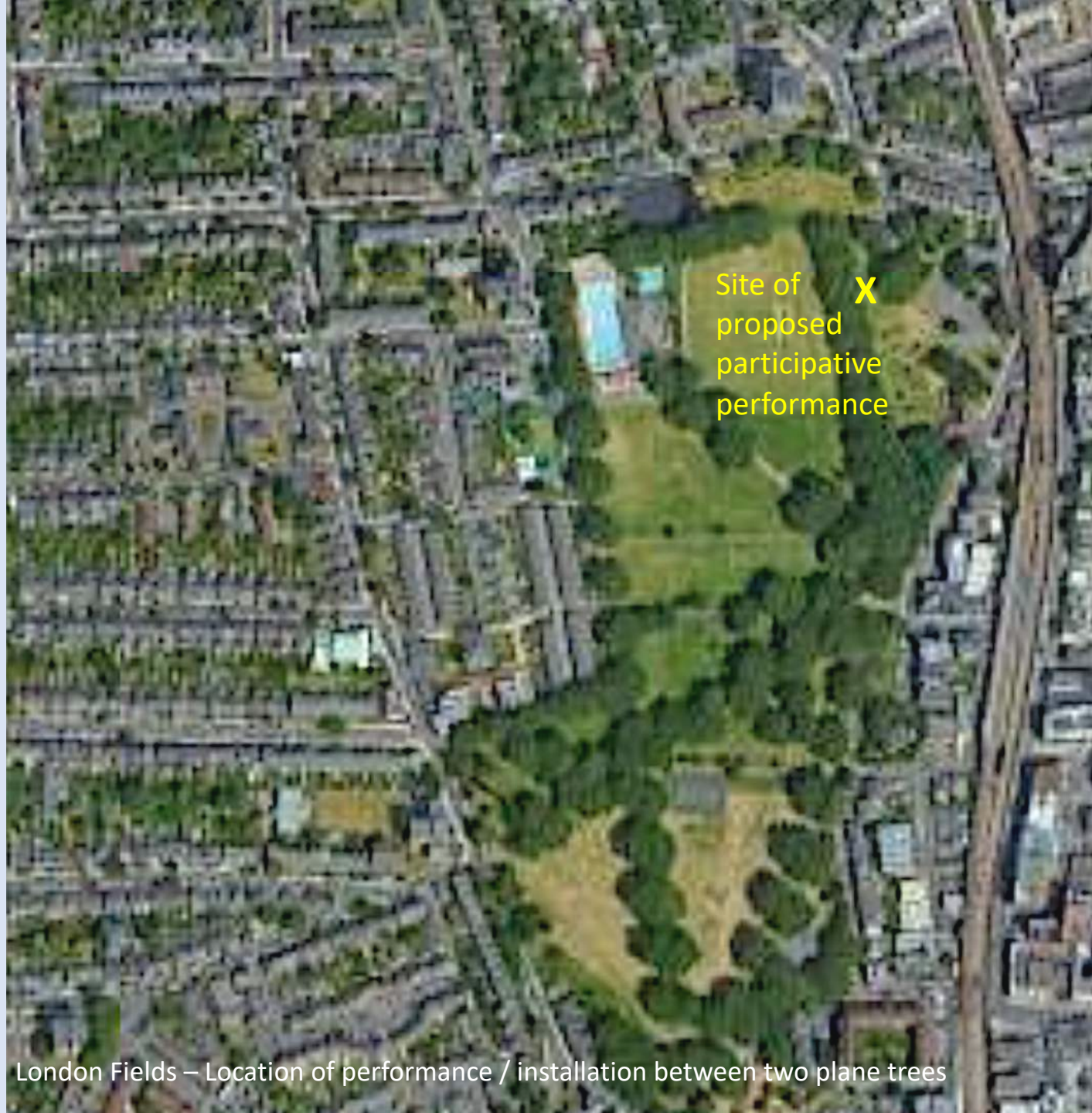
Event dates: two Saturdays in June, at noon

Permissions: As the event is going to be published in the London Festival of Architecture (LFA) calendar, it will be better to obtain permission from Hackney Council.

In theory there is no reason not to hold an informal event in the park. Many parties with marquees take place - one would need to set up a zone that we plan to use, putting out blankets.

Publication deadline of LFA Calendar – mid April

## Trees Talk



Site of X  
proposed  
participative  
performance

London Fields – Location of performance / installation between two plane trees

## Co-collaborator:

Artist Bettina and I have not worked on an art project together – her art interest is in drawing as “action” – and social engagement. She has agreed to participate in this piece, to develop together. We agreed we need 2 facilitators on the day, to help with the audience.

## Participative audience:

The audience will apply to come via Eventbrite – we can ask some questions: about their mobility levels and whether they want to participate or watch. We will encourage local people to participate.

# Trees Talk



Elrington Road, Hackney March 2021

## Parks and public spaces

### Permissions

As the event is going to be published in the London Festival of Architecture activities, it will be better to obtain permission from Hackney Council.

Other events by the trees:

In theory there is no reason not to hold an informal event in the park.

One would need to set up the zone for use, putting out blankets.

To investigate: department for permission

### Equipment

- Rope, or coloured streamers or LED lit conduit

# Trees Talk

Drawing - study of underground network of care - March 2021



**If trees talk and speak—  
what is being said to  
us?**

**Questions about forms of  
communication:** How can  
the artists act as guides to  
form this connection between  
trees to humans?

Instigating communication  
between participants: How can  
we create an exchange/  
communication between the  
group of participants?

Safety is key – I would love to  
whisper messages to each  
other, to keep this hidden and  
create a sense of intimacy –  
but that is not possible under  
COVID situation. Even passing  
written messages has issues.

**Trees talk –  
we listen**



## Parks and public spaces

### But wait a minute:

Our streets and public parks are not as safe as they could be – there is fear, and danger - this has been highlighted due to recent event – although the problem has been a constant one.

We do not feel completely safe in our public spaces especially at night.

Can the celebration of discourse between trees take on other subjects or topics?

This subject overlaps in time – tributes / vigils took place in London Fields last week.

# Trees Talk



**X** marks the spot for pop-up memorial for Sarah Everard / Protest signs from this week, following the assault / killing of Sarah Everard in south London, carried out by a policeman.

The vigils / protest marches that took place in London afterwards were marked by police violence against those women protesting. Meanwhile, a bill is being passed this week making the sentence to **damaging a public statue can be** greater than that of committing rape. Misogyny and the violence of racism must be taken seriously – steps taken to eradicate from society.

Tribute / protest



London Fields – Ancient trees create enclosure for memorial, March 2021

LONDON FIELDS LIDO

CAFÉ

⚡ REMEMBERING ⚡  
MEANS FIGHTING  
women's **Strike**

RECLAIM  
THE

2 Women 1 Wage  
Per 10 UK

RECLAIM THE NIGHT

BIBA  
NIGOLE

London Fields - Tributes and protest banners installed on 13<sup>th</sup> March 2021





We need to have public spaces that are caring for all

Can multiple events in the park comment on community care?

Multiple frames of actions in the park



Can this performance involving trees cover social issues?

## Next Steps

Further consideration: how can we mix emotions in a single event – the positive bringing together of people with the questioning

Further collaboration: Discussion with our group, discussion with my artist collaborator; wider discussions.

Further research: want to better understand the science of tree communication.

Additional documentation of the ongoing process of developing this project.

Concept: continue to float – what is the messages of care that can be transmitted?

Roadmap: to be developed

# Trees Talk



# RESOURCES – TREES

Further research needed into the science of trees and the fungus of Mycorrhizal

<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/science-environment-44643177>

Canadian forester <https://www.ecowatch.com/trees-communicate-2646209343.html?rebellitem=5#rebellitem5>

<https://untamedscience.com/biology/ecology/mycorrhizae/>

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/earth/story/20141111-plants-have-a-hidden-internet>

<http://mns.stwst.at/>

<http://www.feralpractice.com/W-Mycorrhizal-Meditation/index.php>

## Another idea – Wilton Way’s sTreet Festival, summer 2021

This street festival (located on the street I live on) used to happen regularly – but did not engage fully with the entire street community – there were social divides. This always bothered me. The key aim would be to be more inclusive (and possibly connect with the new trees added to the street during 2020)

NOTE - This would require a lot of organization – best to wait until we know about COVID opening up



**This local house’s front is painted to form a billboard with messages of good will March 2021**