

LANDSCAPE REBELS

Evaluation report

'Having time to think and
look'

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Landscape Rebels: Art meets the climate crisis

Landscape Rebels at Christchurch Mansion presented artist and maker responses to the Suffolk landscape, exploring what part art has in tackling the climate crisis.

The exhibition, from 22 October 2022 to 16 April 2023, brought together artworks by Turner, Constable and Monet alongside natural history, costume and global stories to show a range of responses to the changing landscape and environmental themes. Ipswich Museum collections were displayed alongside national loan items. The exhibition was arranged into six sections (Natural Rebels, Coastal Rebels, Material Rebels, Art Rebels, Global Rebels and Local Rebels) and interspersed with personal stories and calls to action. There was space for visitors to add their own pledges on actions to tackle the climate crisis.

Landscape Rebels aimed to:

1. Recover visitor levels to pre-pandemic levels
2. Broaden Christchurch Mansion's visitor profile by becoming more relevant to Ipswich's communities who are within the Kaleidoscope Creativity, Facebook Families, and Up Our Street Audience Finder segments
3. Develop staff and community expertise and confidence in developing future programmes of exhibitions and activities
4. Raising awareness of nature and landscape through art
5. Audiences feel empowered to make small changes to address climate change

Three artist commissions were delivered in collaboration with local community groups and an event programme was delivered at Christchurch Mansion and in the community.

1. Evaluation methodology

Project aims 1- 3 were monitored by Ipswich Museum staff through staff and visitor surveys. External evaluation looked at aims 4 and 5 and used a mixed method approach to consider:

Raised awareness of nature and landscape through art

- Have people found out something new or thought differently about the natural environment and the climate crisis?
- What connections do people make between themselves, local and global environments?
- How have the creative commissions engaged target audiences with the natural environment?

Inspiration to make small changes

- Are people encouraged to think about the small changes they can make to effect climate change?

Data collection

Qualitative and quantitative data was collected through surveys and comments:

- 98 surveys were completed by visitors at events or on visits.

- 71 comments were received through social media.
- 16 responses were received from peers and staff.
- Three gallery sessions in February, March and April captured qualitative data from 33 families. Visitors recorded responses to the exhibition in a collage activity and as photo feedback using ipads to take and annotate photos with their comments, with happy, sad, confused/question cards as visual prompts.
- Conversations with two of the commissioned artists to explore their reflections on the process and a gallery visit with one of the community groups.

2. Landscape Rebels: Findings

2.1 Have people found out something new or thought differently about the natural environment and the climate crisis?

Event surveys show that 81 people strongly agreed or agreed that they had learnt something new about landscape and nature in Suffolk.

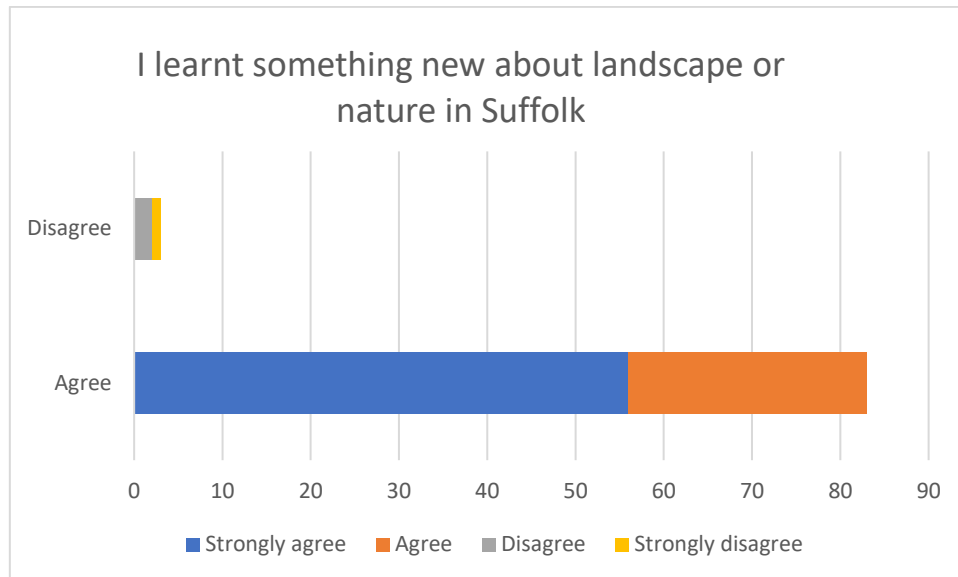


Figure 1: Based on event survey results from February, March and April (98 responses)

Comments show learning about the local environment, conversations within families about the landscape and finding new places to visit or ways to be in nature:

'I have lived in Suffolk my whole life and have learnt a lot today'.

'I particularly learnt about ecology of the local rivers'

'I learnt about things we find on the beach'

'To do with beach cleaning and identifying things'.

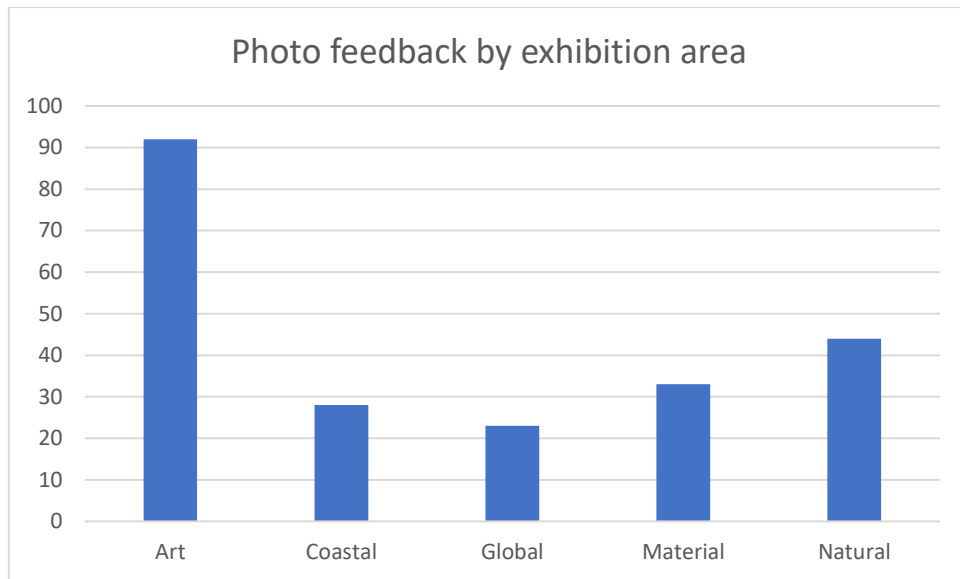


Figure 2: Photo feedback responses grouped into exhibition areas (210 responses from 33 families, 20 young people)

The exhibition prompted thoughts about the landscape, particularly noticing change and feelings of appreciation. Photo feedback has been grouped by exhibition area, with Art Rebels prompting most responses (92), followed by Natural Rebels (44). Global Rebels prompted the fewest responses (23).

The theme of documenting change was picked up by many visitors:

'This exhibition is a one-off, celebrating historically, a then and now comparison'

'By seeing the paintings I thought about the history of nature'

'...with all the paintings we can see here it definitely shows how different things were back then and also how better it would have been as well. I feel like now when you look around...not really much for anyone to paint anymore now and I feel back then there was much to paint because how beautiful things back in the times before we were born.'

Appreciation of the landscape and natural world was a theme explored by visitors, particularly in connection to familiar places such as Holywells Park and Christchurch Park. One visitor felt that seeing places they were familiar with helped them to see them with fresh eyes: 'It makes me appreciate the beauty around me', 'We should venerate our ancient trees', 'Holywells looks so serene, we want it back'.

Younger visitors particularly engaged with natural history, commenting most about the turtle, and the birds which were displayed at a lower height. Comments were mixed between enjoying seeing something new: 'they are really strange birds, I've never seen them before' [about the jack snipe] and confusion: 'Because the birds were killed and stuffed. I liked it initially, then I was sad as I realised something had to die'.

Some visitors commented on 'shock moments' of displaying historic landscapes next to natural history that invited them to consider not only how the landscapes have changed but the impact of those changes on wildlife. Seeing moths and bees prompted thoughts on habitat loss, species adaptation as well as questioning human respect for nature that allowed the specimens to be collected in the first place. Displaying different collections together gave some visitors a 'new lens' to see and consider the themes and many enjoyed this new approach: 'I like the way its mixed up.' In this way, families were prompted to discuss connections between natural history, environmental messages, habitat loss, extinction, and landscape management:

'The green turtle is going extinct because of hunting. Made me feel sad. if they go extinct, we won't remember them.'

'Animals live in trees and if animals live in that tree it won't have any home'
[Fallen Pines]

'Nanny told me they used this animal's scales for medicine and I don't really like how they capture them'

'Makes me feel sad, the bees are going extinct. I don't want them to, she is one of the best pollinators'

Events were a stimulus for families to discuss and learn about environmental issues and changing landscapes, but some visitors felt the messages were not always clear or drawn out as much as they needed to understand the link with the exhibition:

'really helped the children think about flowers and insects and how we all need to respect and appreciate nature'

'This activity mostly centred around arts and crafts, with less focus on the landscape and nature in Suffolk'.

Photo responses to Global Rebels were mainly focused on the Kiribati weapon. One visitor linked the use of sharks' teeth to their endangered status. No feedback mentioned environmental issues for Kiribati as an island or climate injustice. One response to Skaters on Frozen River (Cornelis Beelt) suggested this could be interpreted to provide context about climate change, saying 'it's a different climate to now, we don't see this now...it could be helpful to put in context'.

Another visitor saw 'a cry of distress' in Mali Morris's Athabasca Trail, commenting that the work helped her understand the whole exhibition, although overall she thought the messages were too subtle. As someone already interested in environmental issues, she felt she had missed the ideas of the exhibition in the displays and hadn't felt a call to action, suggesting stronger 'more emotive quotes'.

One visitor linked the skill and resilience of artists to create these works to the resilience needed to tackle the climate emergency.

2.2 What connections do people make between themselves, local and global environments?

Photo feedback shows people connecting the exhibition with themselves and the local area. People enjoyed seeing places they are familiar with and linking landscapes on display to their interests and family activities. Some used this as a jumping off point for conversations on the climate crisis, particularly then and now comparisons noted above. The Suffolk viewpoint was significant as people could feel themselves in the landscapes, bringing an added understanding of the threats and changes. This sensory connection was significant for children who linked to their experiences of playing in the water at Flatford or lying down next to the river at Stafford St Mary.

'Holywell park with 8 ponds was so beautiful. I'll never forget that.'

'reminds me of Pin Mill, we've had nice walks there'

'we love a bit of gardening, we grow our veg...I love the meaning, made do with what you had...it shows what we're capable of' [Wartime Garden]

Collage responses illustrate other connections. Collages created on the half-term event day all related to environmental themes and reflected the discussions and activities at the different stalls. One child made a connection in their collage between competition for land use between houses, food production and habitats (Greenhouses and Stop Building Houses: We need more green houses to protect plant and food / Stop building houses on greenery because its taking too much land up, figure 3). Connections were weaker when the exhibition was the sole stimulus or when there was a single craft activity.



Figure 3: Protect our beaches: To protect our beaches you have to stop littering (left). Greenhouses and Stop Building Houses collage (right)

Many visitors connected with Coastal Rebels, drawn to its familiarity, noticeable changes and local news coverage. One visitor commented that Hemsby had been on the news the night before in a story about people losing their homes because of coastal erosion. Another noted: 'You can't live here and go to the beach and not be aware of effect of sea and environment on physical structures.'

Collage titles and descriptions written by participants

The day of the garden flood: A garden and pretty lake but it's going to flood because people have thrown rubbish in

Protect our beaches: To protect our beaches you have to stop littering (figure 3)

Fox eggs: It's about 2 fox eggs. Tiger's going to eat them, fox mum needs to protect so she throws herself so the human has to bring the eggs home to look after them

Connections made to global issues were less apparent as noted above. A peer review observed 'people in places like Kiribati are experiencing the effects of climate change to a tremendous extent despite bearing little involvement in industrial and extractive activities that have led to climate change.' Other visitors were drawn to the Kiribati objects but didn't comment on their significance.

2.3 How have the creative commissions engaged target audiences with the natural environment?

Landscape Rebels facilitated three creative commissions: Power Surge by Felicity Hammond, A Place to Care For by Kate Flurrie, and work by Rock Paper Scissors.

Kate Flurrie and 4YP, A Place to Care For

Kate worked with young people, 14 – 22 years old, to create a film and digital animation and audio poem. This was projected onto a screen made of recycled and repurposed plastic waste and installed in the Mansion. The aim of the work was to explore effects of climate change and the local environment.

Extract from A Place to Care For

Earth is where we live, a place we need to care for

Earth means life and growth

Earth is everything, without it we don't exist

Importance of time and trust

Time and trust were key elements to working with this group. When the original plan to work with the young people during their walk and talk session changed because of the time of year, more time was needed to build understanding of the project. Spending time to develop trust as a group in which all participants could see the value of their contributions was important. This was significant for the group visit to the exhibition which boosted confidence and was a turning point in bringing audio into the final work. Until then the young people hadn't wanted to be recorded but afterwards were more willing. Kate puts this down to seeing the value of their contribution to the exhibition, understanding that it would be publicly displayed alongside established artists, and being made to feel special (having the gates to the park unlocked for them and visiting out of hours.)

'They loved coming to the mansion, that was a really popular session. Some of them then went on to record audio [for the final work] they were more confident.'

'It was less of a big conversation for them'

No-one in the group was openly passionate about environmental issues, but the time allowed for discussion meant that they could think and develop ideas with the support of trusted youth workers and peers. Participants knew the messages about what to do, e.g., recycling, but weren't thinking of how they apply on a personal level, for example, leaving phones on charge or buying fast fashion. Kate felt their conversations were useful to raise awareness of the impact of even small actions and changes in behaviour.

The gallery visit allowed space for relaxed looking and thoughtful feedback, fostered by supportive adults who encouraged investigation, conversation and application of knowledge. Responses show members of the group making connections with recent events such as forest fires, flooding, and reflecting on how art can help people think about environmental issues.

'to begin with I thought it was like it gave off autumn vibes, like the leaves and everything, its...but then I looked at it a bit more...and we looked at it (to partner) and then it looks like a forest fire which we then realised that it was. So to begin with I thought it was just meant to be leaves but then I saw it as a fire which was really interesting...isn't it meant to be based off the forest fires that have been happening quite a lot?'

'... art can show the good things like how beautiful it is like the painting on the walls how beautiful nature is and if we keep destroying the environment we won't have these beautiful things to paint, we won't have all of these amazing animals that are in the taxidermy frames, we won't have them in the world any more so art can be a big like push to show people like this is what we've got we need to keep this.'

Rock Paper Scissors and Jobcentre Plus families

Rock Paper Scissors (RPS) are a grass roots community arts organisation with a focus on creative learning. They were commissioned to work with Jobcentre Plus clients and led sessions in the Wolsey Gallery and at the Jobcentre in Ipswich.

'Genuine connections and rapport'

RPS asked 'what can we do that's really based on Landscape Rebels?' This focused their work on the familiar, being inspired by images, colours and objects on display, and linking these with familiar techniques that would be available to participants regardless of confidence, knowledge and skill. RPS distilled shapes from Gainsborough's Holywell Park, linking it with the colour palette from Emma Connelly's Entangled Land to anchor their mural in the exhibition and local landscape: 'Our families really connected with this image of the park.'

Establishing trust and confidence with participants was fundamental to the work, with RPS looking for genuine connections with participants. They facilitated this by scaffolding activities in the gallery space followed up at the Job Centre. People could drop in and out as they wanted to and not feel under pressure to take part. One practitioner felt the Job Centre day was 'the most rewarding day ever', with participants choosing to return, stay for a sustained length of time, engage with and enjoy the activities.

The collective nature of creating the final mural provided space for participants to discuss what they were doing and what they had seen. While painting, two participants were chatting about the exhibition with curiosity, commenting on the turtle, 'it's green but it's brown.'

Similar to Kate's experience, practitioners felt it was hard for participants to make a personal connection to the climate crisis. They were all aware through school of messages such as Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and the group talked about reusing materials for their work. One participant bought in materials from home to use after that discussion.



Figure 4: The colours, shapes and patterns to create this landscape are all inspired by the artwork created by the wonderful families in response to the exhibition 🌻

2.3 Are people encouraged to think about the small changes they can make to effect climate change?

Event surveys show that 86 people strongly agreed or agreed that they were inspired to make small changes based on Landscape Rebels. More detailed comments fall into three groups: Doing more of an existing action (9); New actions (9); Awareness (8).

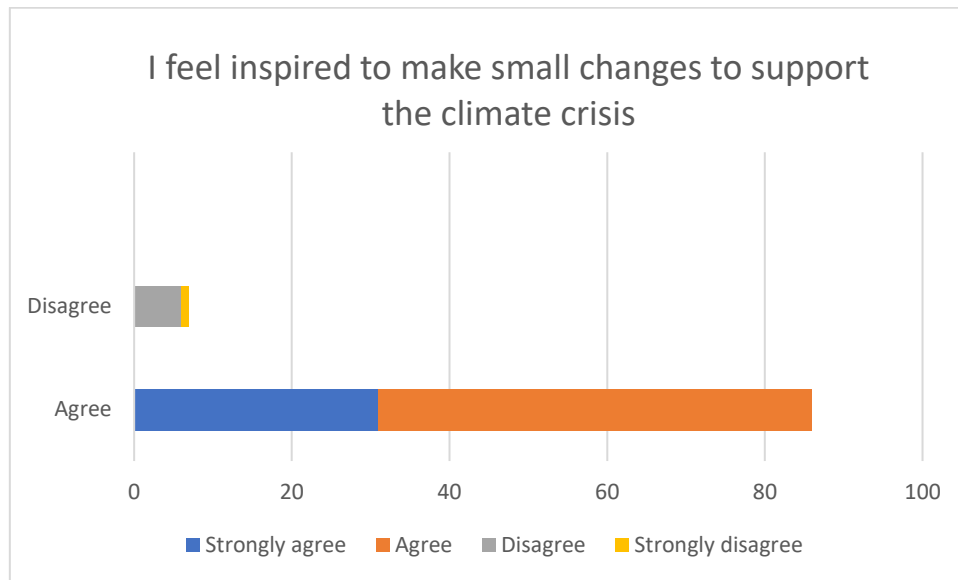


Figure 5: 86 respondents answered that they strongly agree or agree that they are inspired to make small changes, based on event survey responses from February, March and April (98 responses).

Doing more: This was focused primarily on home recycling and recycling materials for crafts inspired by the craft activities at the mansion.

'We reuse items in artwork at home but it's [the event] helped my 5 year old to engage more the Reduce, Reuse, Recycle mindset'

'We have already started recycling a lot more at home and will continue to make sure we have used an item to its full capacity before discarding it'

New actions: People were inspired to join organised activities such as litter picks and beach cleans, as well as individual actions such as setting aside areas in their gardens for wildlife and making a wormery. One visitor was inspired to think about sustainable fashion and buying second hand clothes. Crafting was also mentioned in this group with people taking ideas from the half-term cardboard flower craft event to try at home:

'I liked it that it was using cardboard and no glue and tape'

'Using sustainable materials for arts and crafts – a good idea, not always buying materials'

Awareness: This covers comments without mention of specific actions, including feeling more aware of material use at home. One visitor commented that they felt they could make changes but 'I don't think I could do enough to make a change'.



Figure 6: The pledge wall and pledge card with seed paper.

One family commented that the pledge wall had been an inspiration for them to consider and commit to what they could do. People liked receiving the seed paper as a token and this made them feel as though they had taken a first step to making a change. It also provided a way to keep exploring exhibition themes at home.

Some families questioned if more could have been done to help them to think of changes: 'This activity mostly centred around arts and crafts, with less focus on making small changes to support the climate crisis.' Another visitor commented that: 'It was lovely to go home with some seeds to plant. In similar vein, I would love to see a museum provide workshops and classes in gardening, or recycling materials to make artworks, or upcycling clothes.'

3. Landscape Rebels: outcomes of Art meets the climate crisis

Raising awareness of nature and landscape through art

Overall, people were impressed with the scope of the exhibition, the quality of the work on display and its ambition to explore the topic and combine collections. Events and commissions helped focus attention on the subject and family responses collected on event days were specific in thought and intention, putting the exhibition in the context of what was happening around them. Many responses were reflective and meaningful, expressing a new or increased appreciation of the landscape and local environments, particularly those local and coastal places with the most changes due to human activity and climate change.

However, some visitors found the connection to the climate crisis less obvious and questioned if the exhibition and overall messaging was too subtle, allowing them to leave without fully realising what it was about. While visitors connected stories and impacts locally, very few considered the global picture or wider issues. The mix of collections successfully brought a range of objects into conversation with one another, offering visitors a chance to appreciate the natural world and think about threats to it, but it's a mixed picture of how successful this was. Reactions to costume and world culture tended to be based on the objects themselves rather than on the meaning of them in the context of the environmental message and more interpretation was needed for people to make those links. For example, the Kiribati sword was commented upon by many people who were curious about the materials and its function, but no-one connected the object with the climate crisis. Similarly, no-one mentioned the 'what can I do' moments suggesting they needed more prominence, along with more personal reflections and statement quotes.

One observation about Landscape Rebels, that it felt 'different to usual exhibitions about landscape painting' would seem to hit the nail on the head. A spotlight on representations of the landscape was well received and succeeded in bringing the big environmental issues to a local scale for people to connect with, but the natural history, costume and world cultures were less stand out and harder to understand.

Audiences feel empowered to make small changes to address climate change

Some people intend to make small changes to address climate change because of the exhibition although those will not be measured. It is noticeable that the more in-depth conversations happening during the commission work highlighted that some people struggle to make a personal connection and to see their actions as having a part to play. Commission practitioners noted that everyone knew what they should do but didn't always apply it. More personal stories and 'what can I do' moments may have supported people in feeling able to make small changes, and as one comment mentioned 'to really engage visitors with their place in a complex situation.'

Many people were inspired to make pledge and used exhibition events as their inspiration to consider what to do and how to do it. Whether they have taken those steps is unknown. Adding pledges to the display board and leaving them for other visitors to read may have been helpful in inspiring other people to similarly commit to changes. The board did become crowded and perhaps removing some pledges and finding a mechanism for

showcasing them could have been a way to share ideas and inspire people. Analysing the pledges could also help develop next steps for community engagement in this area, drawing out common topics and planning events to support those. For example, some people mentioned planting for wildlife in their garden which could be supported by gardening workshops.

Another way of supporting people with their individual small changes could be more direction to other resources, showcasing and linking to local groups and activities. The event days were popular for doing this, and regular repeats or promotion of some of the services featured could be explored in future. For example, hosting repair shops <https://suffolkrecycling.org.uk/reduce-your-waste/repair-cafes> or demonstrating a Library of Things <https://www.libraryofthings.co.uk/>.

4. Recommendations



Figure 7: These eight pathways are from the Culture Takes Action framework, developed by Bridget McKenzie of Climate Museum UK. <https://www.culturedeclares.org/take-action/>

The Culture Declares Emergency Culture Takes Action model is helpful to summarise the activities of Landscape Rebels and to consider pathways for the future. This tool is intended for detailed planning and supported by resources <https://www.culturedeclares.org/take-action/pathways-to-action/>. A simple analysis in 'Telling truths' and 'Support transition' pathways shows Landscape Rebels' successes in presenting stories and creatively engaging with visitors and target audiences. Other pathways developed in the framework could provide guidance for all future work and as a tool for keeping the climate emergency as a priority. A local contact could be Suffolk Library service that has already declared a climate emergency and proposed action <https://www.suffolklibraries.co.uk/about/initiatives-and-impact/suffolk-libraries-environmental-action-pledge>.

On a smaller scale, people responded well to the approach of sustainable arts and craft and commented they will do this at home, repurposing materials and using less prepared kits and resources. Maintaining this as a feature of future family work could help people to see those personal moments of action and to provide talking points within the family.

Building upon this, some families were interested in more active opportunities, either within groups such as litter picks and beach cleans, or individually, such as gardening and growing vegetables. Providing regular classes or a forum that supports people to be active and come together could help families to feel connected to each other and guide them through small changes, with the benefit of being measurable. Family champions could also spread the word to others in their community.