



# MAKE ROOM

#04

## Art as a Way of Knowing Place

MAKE Room, conceived by Local and co-designed with artists from Glassball Studio, formed as a roaming arts initiative across Derbyshire in late 2024, fostering collaboration, environmental awareness with sustainable practice. A physical and conceptual space, it invited communities to engage with many human and more-than-human collaborators, inviting people to ask: ***How can Nature reinvent us?***

During our MAKE Room commission within the Derbyshire Makes programme, those we worked with met Nature through touch, movement, sound, and material exploration. These sensory approaches help transform familiar places into sites of curiosity and connection, encouraging people to see Nature not as static scenery but as an active collaborator in the creative process.

MAKE Room continued to evolve through community led events, periodicals, mobile reading collection and adaptable art structures. It seeded a wider creative ecology grounded in shared ownership, environmental attentiveness and local resilience—inviting all of us to make space, create room, and let Nature help shape what comes next.

Designed as both an artistic framework and a community-led inquiry, MAKE Room used creative activity to bring people into closer contact with the places they live. Through walks, sensory workshops, shared making, and the co-design of temporary structures, the project invites residents to explore the land, not as passive observers, but as collaborators.

This approach reflects something writer and artist James Bridle expresses in *Ways of Being* (2022): “*Art helps us learn to live with other intelligences.*”

Bridle’s idea captures the essence of MAKE Room. The programme creates open situations in which people encounter the more-than-human world—plants, materials, weather, soil, textures, atmospheres—as active participants in the creative process. MAKE Room is not just a place—it’s an idea, a movement, a roaming act of imagination. Rooted in Derbyshire’s cultural and natural heritage, it evolved into a site-responsive art programme that invited communities to re-imagine their relationship with Nature through art making, research and reciprocity.

## A Growing Ecology of Creativity

Glassball Studio was founded through a shared artistic enquiry into how places are formed, inhabited and can be re-imagined. Our work sits at the intersection of art, architecture and social practice, using creative processes to further people’s understanding of how their communities, histories and shared environments shape

everyday life. Our work uses contemporary art as a connective tissue, revealing shared concerns and fostering new social encounters.

This speaks directly to Claire Bishop’s view that describes participatory art as that in which ‘*people constitute the central artistic medium and material*’, emphasizing the shift from object-based art to socially relational practices that reconfigure how people interact with each other and the artwork. (*Bishop, Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship, Verso, 2012*) MAKE Room builds precisely these new relations—between artworks, between organisations, between generations, and between local communities and the environments they share.

Our ongoing practice emerges from this artistic grounding: to make artworks that are collaborative, public and responsive to the specificities of place; cultivating creative encounters across social, geographic and generational boundaries; using the tools of contemporary art to open up conversations about working class lived experience, belonging, heritage and the future of our shared environments.

As we reflect on our year long commission, MAKE Room sparked a county-wide conversation on Nature Connectedness by transporting ideas—not materials—between communities, encouraging residents to reflect on their relationship with the land and each other. Each MAKE Room grew from its surroundings, shaped by its people, materials, and conditions. This commitment to plurality, locality, and collaboration invited reflection on power, agency, and who designs the world around them. This initiative created a powerful exchange network of participants and audiences to recognise common environmental concerns and understand their relationship to the local landscape.

Rather than producing a single touring artwork, MAKE Room functioned as a process-based artwork, where ideas travelled instead of materials. Each MAKE Room emerged from its local conditions, access to free or repurposed materials, histories, and constraints specific to place.

**How could we create an artwork that responds to nature, fosters an embodied connectedness and provides a physical space for others to inhabit?**

Initially, the development aimed to present a series of apparent contradictions as a way to challenge key aspects of our practice. This was also intended to spark discussion about the natural environment and our role in localised action within the systems of Derbyshire Makes.

- *How can Nature proximity be expressed within an artificial artwork? or How can an artwork respond to Nature while being artificial?*
- *How can an artwork exist across different places without moving?*
- *How do we explore environmental issues without adding to environmental impact?*

Our countywide commission involved travelling across Derbyshire and potentially needing materials from various geographically distant locations. This raised the question of how we can articulate environmental ideas without inadvertently contributing to further negative environmental impact. We wanted to highlight everyday domestic examples that negatively affect the environment but are often misunderstood and entangled processes. From complex food production and loss of Nature connection, to the displacement of responsibility regarding recycling and the growing use of AI technologies with their 'hidden' costs of energy and water.

We wanted to use engagement processes that offered multiple entry points catering to varying levels of confidence, mobility and cultural familiarity with the arts. Our goal was to create inclusive non-hierarchical encounters and creative prompts in public spaces. This involved collaborating with individuals and organisations through time-based exchanges. We also supported specific group activities within our commission, such as volunteering with Wilder Whitfield, which fed directly into our developing work. This fostered trust through shared experiences and provided a platform for discussing further concepts and ideas for our artworks.

We invited several organisations into our open practice, taking groups with us as we developed ideas, cultivating partnerships across sectors—schools, libraries, youth groups, environmental organisations, local businesses, voluntary networks—ensuring our work reflects local diversity and strengthens long-term cohesion infrastructure.

At the various festivals, communities encountered distilled versions of the design-research process. Visitors could test ideas, leave traces, and take away the MAKE Room principles to share with their own local groups. Workshops were open, playful and accessible, allowing participation without formal artistic confidence. Over time, participants evolved from initial contributors to co-authors, shaping themes, decisions and outcomes. Importantly all the delivered workshops involved working directly with the artworks currently being developed and not simply an applied workshop activity.

Workshops invited participants to explore questions such as:

- *What does Nature mean to you?*
- *What are your Nature memories?*
- *How can our materials, gestures, and decisions reflect our local environment?*

We began to fuse together key environmental concepts and current thinking into an artistic response, formalising as an artwork. Part of our approach was to physically create a way for participants to not just feel like they took part, but to be physically involved within the completed piece, this element existed throughout all of our activities from an event, co-designing, to final artwork construction. This forms our ongoing research into

collaborative methods—open to quick contributions as well as more considered, involved partnerships. It helped participants recognise common environmental concerns and begin to foster new understandings of their locality and a deeper relationship to their landscape.

Participants often described the experience as one of seeing their surroundings differently. A woodland wasn't just trees anymore; it became the spaces in-between, the air, a material, a studio, a classroom, a meeting place. The act of making—touching local materials, responding to weather, listening to the sounds of a site—created an embodied connection to place that felt grounded, immediate, and personal.

In this sense, MAKE Room aligns with Bridle's suggestion that we must learn to collaborate with the world around us. Whether shaping wood from Craft Wood, mapping well water in Glossop, or co-designing structures that could be built anywhere, residents were encouraged to understand Nature not as backdrop, but as co-author.

MAKE Room modelled plurality: no single form was definitive; every site could adapt, modify, or rethink the structure to fit its own sense of place. The interventions—placed in parks, high streets, and woodlands—were designed to be inviting, lightweight, and easy to assemble. They asked not only *What is the artwork?* but *Who is it for?* and *How might people use it?*

Each potential artwork had to be responsive to each community location and environment, involving deep listening and immersion, ensuring the art work reflects local identities, materials and responds to real social dynamics. The artworks were to operate in accessible public settings like community spaces, high streets and parks, creating neutral environments where participation is open.

The installation process is also meant to be an aspect of the commission that still asks the questions involved in its creation, we decided to make this process freely available, easy and quick to assemble and install. This enabled multiple sites to be considered for its installation, sharing the process online allowed other places and communities to consider their own materials, adapt and exchange ideas in creating their future MAKE Rooms. Within Glossop, Whitfield Well was a perfect space to re-imagine as a MAKE Room.

*"For me, as a British Guyanese, Black, Muslim woman, space is never neutral or simply given. The project foregrounds pluriversality: multiple entangled worlds and worldviews coexisting, influencing one another. Space is not only physical; it is narrative, psychological, and political. It's a place where histories, perspectives, and possibilities converge."* Khadijah Carberry, collaborator and participant at MAKE Room - Sites of Resilience, held at Craft Wood, Derbyshire.



MAKE Room demonstrates how socially engaged, site-responsive art can function as a catalyst for strengthening human–Nature relationships within local contexts. Through participatory practice, the project aligned with research showing that creative, sensory, and place-based activities can deepen Nature Connectedness by fostering emotional resonance, attentiveness, and embodied experience (Lumber, Richardson & Sheffield, 2017). By situating artistic processes directly within community landscapes, MAKE Room enabled participants to re-encounter familiar places with renewed ecological awareness.

The commission’s emphasis on co-authorship and locality reflects contemporary understandings of art as a relational practice—one that produces meaning through shared encounters rather than fixed objects. This approach echoes theories of situated knowledge (Haraway, 1988) and ecological aesthetics, which argue that cultural production can generate **new forms of environmental understanding when it emerges from within the specificities of place**. MAKE Room’s plural, distributed form allowed multiple local ecologies, histories, and worldviews to shape the outcomes.

By allowing ideas rather than materials to travel, the project also modelled low-impact methods aligned with sustainable cultural practice. Such strategies highlight how artistic processes can invite critical reflection on environmental responsibility, prompting participants to consider the hidden infrastructures, energy systems, and everyday behaviours that shape their relationship with the more-than-human world.

Arts-based research on human-Nature connectedness (MM. Muhr, 2020) — this article argues that arts-based methods can “*unveil nuances of human–Nature connectedness that lie beyond words,*” by tapping into emotions and embodied experience. As the author put it: “*arts-based methods ... may transcend the cognitive to elicit unspoken knowledge*” about human–Nature relationships.

For Derbyshire Makes, MAKE Room offered a tested model for commissioning artist-led, environmentally conscious, and socially embedded practice that balances experimentation with accountability. The learning from year one provides a strong foundation for refining commissioning structures, strengthening cross-organisational understanding, and maximising the long-term cultural and environmental value of future iterations.

Ultimately, MAKE Room shows how collaborative art making can activate community-led ecological attention. Through co-design, shared making, and accessible public installations, the project created conditions for people to recognise themselves as part of interconnected social and environmental systems—reinforcing the potential of contemporary art to support deeper, more reciprocal forms of local Nature Connectedness.

Cora Glasser and David Ball







Glossop



Heanor







*It was one of the highlights of the summer - so thank you. We didn't know what to expect and appreciated the dialogue that ensued - and the walk through the trees to the clearing where you were busy trying out and re-arranging the shapes - comes to mind - as a good moment - a walk leading to the reveal of the make room in the woods.*

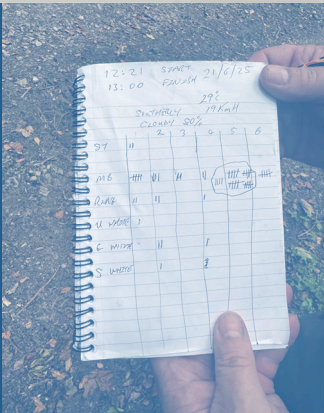
*The Thursday crew together with our other makers enjoyed being commissioned to construct the shapes involved - and the question they inspired - what are they going to be for? often came up as they were being made. Ben and Lotty and as well as the others who attend, particularly appreciated your stay in the cabin - a first for Craft Wood - it felt like a seminal moment to be hosting our first overnight guests - guests who were taking time to explore and interact with the woods and ourselves. It was a stay that marked both the completion of a little log cabin made from materials from the woods - and a first artist in residency - so a real benchmark.*

*Having yourselves - two artists - be and spend time in the woods - seeing you come up with a response to how to Make Room for nature, seeing your playfulness. The occasional head scratching as you took an idea to its fruition - and seeing how you interacted with the site and the folks of the wood - left a good mark.*

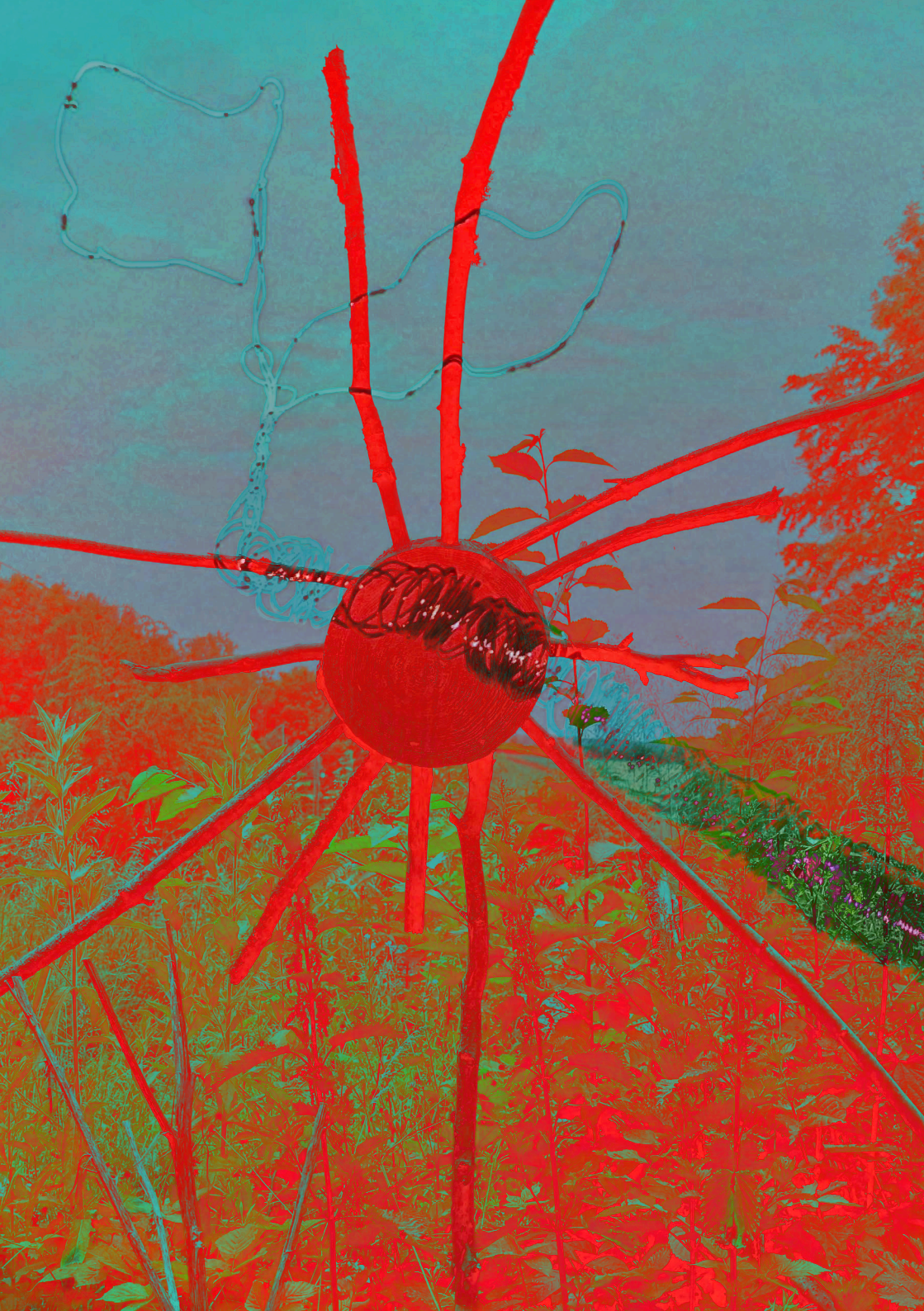
*Ben in particular enjoyed following the Make room on social media - and seeing The Frog!*

*Be good to look at ways - we could get some further artists in residence going forward. Your time in the woods has left a desire to see more art and artists on site.*

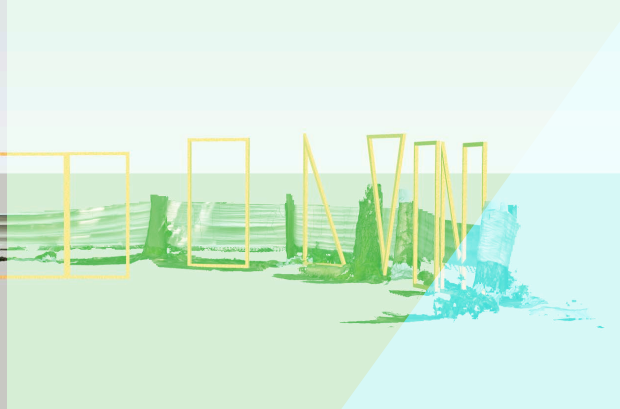
Thomas Erskine, Craft Wood















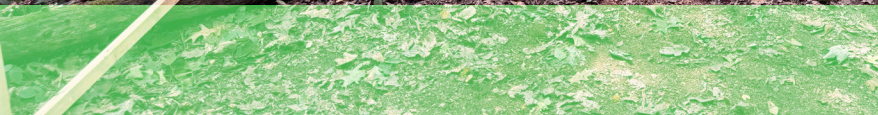








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Wisdom of Water @ Whitfield Well



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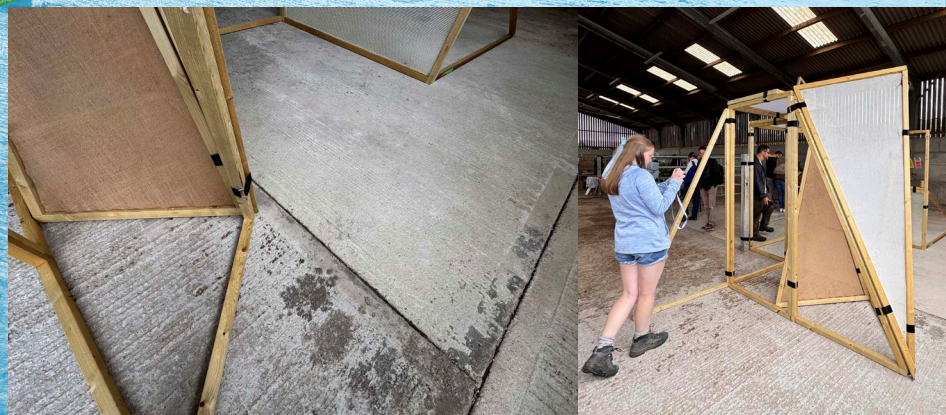
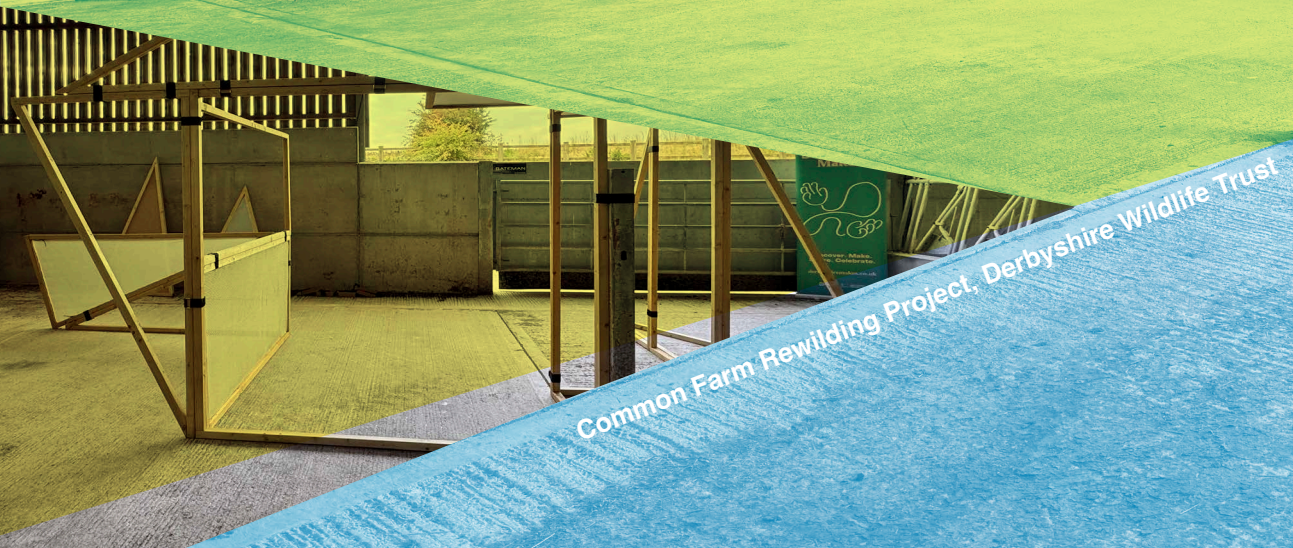


Water I am by Jane Doyle

Drip, drop  
Falling from the sky  
Caught by a blade of grass  
Funnelled to the peaty earth  
Where I slowly seep deeper and deeper  
Meeting other drops  
Gathering until we are a perpetual  
bubbling spring  
Travelling downhill our path  
is mapped beneath houses, roads and gardens.  
Emerging in stone troughs  
Open to being scooped up by a birds  
beak, a dogs tongue or a watering can  
Spared! I swirl on from view down culverts and pipes  
Onwards with my journey  
As water, I am











## **Make Room: Carving Space, Holding Multiplicity**

“What if we open up the imagination of the single narrative to give space (literally) for a multiplicity of trajectories?”

— For Space, Doreen Massey, 2012

This summer, I was invited by Glassball Studios to take part in the remaking of an iteration of the MAKE Room, a collaborative, modular installation developed in the woodland of Craft Wood. The project holds a compelling question: how can an artwork exist across different places without moving? Each MAKE Room grows from its surroundings, shaped by the people, materials, and conditions that define its site.

What drew me in was the project's commitment to plurality, locality, and collaboration. It invites reflection on power, agency, and the question of who gets to design and shape the world around them. The notion that an artwork can exist not only as an object but as a concept, a set of values, or an ethos that can be carried elsewhere and expressed through materials rooted in place felt powerful, especially within our current context. We so often work with materials that bear no relationship to where we are. Suspended in abstraction, we consume and create through the lens of function alone, detached from the land, labour, and histories that make those materials possible.

These ideas sit close to my ongoing practice, Generous Waste, which explores how materials carry the stories of extraction, transformation, and consumption. Through workshops and collaborative mapping, I invite participants to trace the hidden journeys of everyday objects, such as a single-use coffee cup, and to consider what is revealed when we begin to see materials not as neutral or disposable, but as living records of the systems we are part of. Like MAKE Room, this approach begins from the ground up, asking how we might reconnect creative practice to the local and to the specific. It is through this rooted awareness that new connections and shared possibilities can emerge.

MAKE Room reminded me that imagination can be both situated and mobile. It demonstrated how communities can root creative practice within their own contexts, connecting with local materials and processes while imagining possibilities that can travel beyond. That shift in imagination, from consumption to connection, opens space for deeper transformation. It is this combination of rootedness and conceptual mobility, of material inscription and relational dialogue, that resonates with my interest in how space can hold multiplicity and create a sense of agency.

## **Walking Through Space**

When I arrived at Craft Wood, I was struck by the history of the land itself. Once a refuse site, now a resting place for what we define as waste, which really means “what no longer has a clear monetary value” where the woodland is now being regenerated through care and stewardship. Through this living, regenerating environment, we carried the modular pieces shaped by Cora and David from Glassball Studios, their forms abstracted from the woodland itself: clearings, branches, shadows translated into geometric modules.



We carried, paused, placed, and rearranged the pieces. We built and unbuilt rooms in temporary configurations that invited reflection on how we inhabit space, make room for others, and respond to the land. The slope of the ground, the reach of the trees, every small incline shaped how the structure came together.

The process, to me, felt both grounding and indulgent, a privilege of time, attention, and creative freedom. I was conscious of the scale of our act: this intimate making and dwelling in the woodland contrasted sharply with the realities of contested space across the world. Realities of war, displacement, environmental destruction, the struggle to exist with agency. The experience became a meditation on privilege and responsibility, on how the power to create space is unevenly distributed. It made me reflect on my own practice's focus on creating sites of connection within realms of abstraction through connecting with material journeys where agency often lies in our capacity to connect with others, with the natural world, and with the entangled stories that make up our world. Sitting on that land, I saw what agency with land and materials could mean when approached through care, attention, and collaboration.

A few months later, in a barn as part of the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's AGM, I facilitated a workshop alongside Cora and David as they introduced participants to the MAKE Room and its underlying concept. Participants moved through the modular setup, photographing shapes that resonated with them. Using these images, they created Tetra Pak prints inspired by the forms and textures of the structures, printed on paper made from waste as part of my practice, Generous Waste. This brought a deeply tactile material conversation into the experience, where the materials themselves spoke to cycles of use, renewal, and transformation. When participants hung their prints to dry within the structure, their observations and interpretations folded back into the space, extending the dialogue between making, material, and meaning.

### **Space, Pluriversality, and Entanglement**

The power of space has always driven my practice as a British Guyanese, Black, Muslim woman. Space is never neutral or simply given. The intersections of identity create compound challenges where space is often shaped, contested, and must be actively established, protected, and preserved, whether individually or collectively through allyship or shared experience. In our current context, questions of space are evident across the political landscape: is there enough space in our country, in the NHS, in the workforce, in housing, in the land that grows our food? Beyond sensationalism, everyday conversations rarely centre on agency or the power to establish and sustain space, and on what is required to do so effectively and iteratively for our unique needs, adapting to local contexts. It must also be about the collective power to create space: what we ask of our leaders, how shared resources and taxes are directed, and whose needs are acknowledged and met. Developing an understanding of what we require to meet today's challenges, knowledge that can then be transported and adapted to local contexts, becomes essential. How is it that we are relegated to debating whether there is enough space, rather than asking how we can make space, how we can adapt it, and fundamentally how we can make room for our own, increasingly forgotten needs?

For me, MAKE Room brought this into sharp focus. The project foregrounds pluriversality: multiple entangled worlds and worldviews coexisting, influencing one another. The woodland, once degraded,

now regenerates. Our rebuilding became part of that ongoing ecological and relational process. Space is not only physical; it is narrative, psychological, and political. It is a place where histories, perspectives, and possibilities converge.

These questions also echo through my ongoing project Generous Waste, which explores how materials carry layered histories of value, extraction, and renewal. Like MAKE Room, it begins with what is already present — the overlooked or discarded — to imagine new relations between land, people, and possibility.

### **The Artist as World-BUILDER and Demystifier**

Working with MAKE Room was deeply reflective and embodied. Throughout the process, I kept returning to context — what it means to create within a political and social climate that is constantly shifting, mediating between multiple trajectories. For me, the artist as world-builder must hold that reality in view, shaping spaces that invite others into acts of making while acknowledging the structures that constrain them.

To build worlds, to MAKE room, is to imagine new forms of relation and give material expression to possibilities that resist singular narratives. To demystify is to reveal how those narratives are constructed: to surface stories of power, value, and agency that often remain hidden beneath everyday life. This tension between imagination and politics was present in every moment of engagement with the project.

MAKE Room offered a quiet but powerful invitation to reckon with these realities. Carrying, arranging, printing, and sharing became gestures of collective authorship, revealing how creativity can operate as both reflection and renewal, not through grand declarations, but through attentive, relational making. By removing the immediate context of fear or conflict, the project created a space where reflection and connection could unfold, highlighting the complexity of the world we share.

In this sense, the artist becomes both world-builder and demystifier, shaping forms that hold multiplicity while making visible the conditions that shape, limit, and enable creative engagement.

### **Making Room Together**

Making space is never neutral. It is political, material, and relational. The invitation to imagine differently must also hold space for reckoning with histories of exclusion, with who gets to build and belong, with which forms of knowledge and care are made visible.

In my experience of MAKE Room, this reckoning unfolded through collective attention. Each action carrying, arranging, printing, sharing, became a gesture of authorship and connection. The project demonstrated how creativity can embody both resistance and renewal, creating small worlds in which care, dialogue, and agency take root.

To open the imagination beyond a single narrative, as Massey reminds us, is to see time and space as interwoven and alive. MAKE Room embodied that process: a way of practising co-existence and



experimenting with possibilities that extend beyond the physical structures themselves. Perhaps the artist's work now lies not in building utopia's, but in creating conditions where multiple futures can be rehearsed. Making room, in that sense, is both method and responsibility, a continual act of asking, together, how we might live and make, together, differently.

Khadijah Carberry



The digital collage opposite brings together images captured during the MAKE Room sharing event at Craft Wood and a workshop hosted at the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust AGM. The letterforms themselves are constructed from images of Tetra Pak prints etched and prints on paper made from waste by attendees during the AGM, embedding participants' visual reflection and marks directly into the text.

The work reflects on what it means to invite people into the process of making room for one another, and what kind of approach we, as artists, have to offer. At its heart, it is about creating conditions where imagination can roam freely. Through playfulness, curiosity, and shared making, the process invites people to move beyond the sometimes limiting boundaries of perceived reality, opening space for different ways of seeing, relating, and being together.





#### **MAKE Room Periodical #04**

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# **Derbyshire Makes**