**15.06.21**

**so I guess if we just start with this one. So whereabouts is this?**

This is the filter beds so you were walking up the river Lea from like Homerton, near where I live and you carry on north towards the Princess of Wales. But before you get the Princess of Wales you you dip off into the filter beds at the North End of Hackney marshes. It's there so it's not the nature reserve so there is the nature reserve and bird sanctuary and stuff. It's the filter beds that are just sort of open to wonder through right by the river?

**Yeah**

And they were looking quite nice.

**Is this recently then?**

Yeah this would be on the I don't know if you get all the data from those photos if you get them on them I cloud but yes it is pretty recent. Let me see when this is. It was basically that first really lovely warm weekend that we got a few weeks ago. Yeah, I think this one. What were you doing with just sort of just a casual, casual wonder? So we do this route a lot. My husband and I will leave our house, will walk over to Chatsworth Road and like get a coffee or pick up whatever shopping we need to get whatever and then we walk up towards Millfields Park and will either walk up towards the river and across the river near the Princess of Wales and then walk back down either through the filter beds or across the marshes around the other side of the marshes and then back home.

Or sometimes will walk on the Chatsworth Road side of the river kind of winding down the paper on that side and crossover green and then carry on. So we do that loop like if we're just gonna do a little. Let wonder together, particularly locked down when it's been like my husband finishes work like 6 it's like you want to go for a little walk that will probably be the one who will do or will do it the other way around. Where will go out from, you know, across the bridge at Daubeney Fields and maybe go down the river a bit, loop up the other side the marshes and wander through the filter beds so that zone, because it's so so accessible to our house. That said, these filter beds weren't open. You could always walk through a little bit of them, but they had locked some of the gates to the wider, you know zone of them and they now open them there. Now open all the time. So when I took this one it was in a part of the filter beds that I haven't been to so much, 'cause they've only just sort of opened them up. The really easy access. And it's quite cool.

There's an old flour mill there. I think I sent you a picture of like a big stone was that one of the ones I sent. Yeah, that's yeah that shortly. Yeah that's like you know part of the kind of old industrial buildings that used to be there. Yeah and there was a pin in pins and needles factory or something in that spot. Yeah yeah that was it. Just yeah, I think it's I'm astounded. A lot of the time around here, where you know I grew up in the peak District's in the middle of the countryside and that that could have been taken down by the Riverside in my parents village.

You know, yeah, but it wasn't. It was taken in east London a lot in, as you said in the bit, that's kind of preserved as a nature reserve just. Just yeah, not even the nature reserve bit, just in reclaimed green space in this area.

**That's interesting. And then I don't know. Just say just that area or looking at that image have any resonance for you? What kinds of things are going through your mind?**

For me, interestingly, it's it's. It's a slightly different kind of picture for the ones I often take because it's just quite kind of. Just if this green isn't it? I mean I take a lot of pictures of green, green and blue. You know, I love that I love the color combinations that you get here visually and I'm just very struck by, you know, you have water and sky and trees and grass and greenery and shrubs and you know that that it's so very starkly water, Sky, land, around here, which I really, really like. This one is unusual for me, and that it's just like it doesn't have a kind of focus. A lot that I'm taking, there's like a journey that you're on the I'm on that I'm kind of capturing. I like taking pars en route through nature, and that's partly because I am on those paths and I'm going. Oh my gosh, it's beautiful. I love it. Let's take a picture or let's remember this or wow this the light is incredible, whatever it might be, but this one I must have just could have been like whoa it's so lush and it's so we're so lucky you know that's what that tells me I just snapped that because. I would have felt so grateful to have been so surrounded and immersed in a landscape that could have been the middle of the English countryside.

Yeah, you know. And hedgerows and you know elderflower in the background there and you know. Yeah, it's really nice.

**yeah, like you say it's a lot more textural than the other pictures.**

Yeah yeah yeah. And the kind of it's not cow parsley, but that that stuff that looks like how parsley is everywhere here that I only recently learned.

**When you were talking about like the the greenness and the those like elemental things, the big skies in the water and stuff is that those like you know if if we're thinking about nature are those the real clear indicators?**

So, it's interesting isn't it? Because I think if you said nature, I wouldn't say that. Actually I think more micro you know, yeah. But actually in my the way that I respond to natural environments. I'm very and the way that I certainly the way that I take pictures in natural environment. It's more about those macro experiences. This guy, the water, the river, the forest, that you know, whatever it might be. You know, I'm in you. Have seen my pictures are not of and very occasionally take, you know, a picture of some detail, shall we say so microelement nature. And when you say nature that's kind of what I think. It's not how I necessarily emotionally respond to it when I'm in it, I'm more these, like you say, larger elemental pieces. The landscape that I live in, really, I suppose.

**Well, that's really interesting. That's interesting, that's probably a flaw in my methods that I hadn't really thought of. So what what's the deal with these structures on the left? Do you know?**

OK, so I think that this is part of an old flour mill. Like you know, like I don't. I did look on the information boards because I was like wow. It's like, you know, it's really cool and the detailing on them is really beautiful and like I love a ruin. I love the I love in this. You'll see there's another picture of any parts everything I sent you I like the moments where nature and man kind of connect again. You know this is some kind of, you know old industrial. Thing. The Victorians built in their industrialized east London and here it is kind of being reclaimed back into a park into a natural space for people here. I think I also took this picture because it gave me kind of like stone table, Aslan on the stone table, CS Lewis sort of vibe like fantasy landscape, sort of vibes.

And you know I remember saying to my husband when I do this I was like Oh my God like if we had kids they would love this. You know there's a display space here. There's imaginative space here and I like finding those moments those little worlds in natural environments and I love that as a kid. Those little spaces that you can claim as your own. What you're saying about this kind of? Bing almost reclaimed by nature in some way. What I mean, so just that, does that mean that in its heyday, this would have been a kind of unnatural? Yeah, the filter beds would have been a big, you know, industrial complex, and I I sort of had an appreciated until we did this little Walker went to this little part of the filters.

We don't often go to that. I was like oh wow information boards from the you know, the River Lee Trust or whatever, telling us about exactly how industrialized this was. I think that that's a really interesting part of. The natural environment here in Hackney. The Hackney Marshes was created by, you know. Rubble from the blitz being pushed into this marshland. Createing new land basically. It was a clean up operation of the Second World War that somewhere like the canal and the river here which you know now feels lush and verdant was an industrial necessity for a you know, for for the industrial heart of the world at the time Victorian industry I like seeing.

I'm interested in history and the idea of place and memory and time on a writer, and I write about that kind of thing. Yeah, this idea of a connection that we have in this city to the thousands and thousands and thousands and thousands of people that have tried these paths before us for different reasons at different times, and those echoes of those times before connect us to the history of this city and will connect us to the future of this city too. And I do find those these kind of moments. In a I find them really powerful I guess, but the way that nature begins to work its way into these, you know, remnants of an industrial past also kind of like speaks to something of London's future. There's this kind of connection of pieces of time. Some have. I kind of feel in those sort of places.

**That's interesting, so there's that sort of thread of history which is a human thread really, I suppose?**

Yeah, nature exists in this little cyclical loop that we see every year cycling through its seasons. But this city cycles through its seasons. Two, and here are those moments in which we remember we are. But a season in this city's life. So yeah, there's this picture of this blossom here. This is very big one. We came back from Norway and I said to my husband, I was like listen I'm very annoyed about the timing of coming back to London because we've missed blossom season in Norway because it hasn't started yet. It's too cold and will have like we have missed it in London because it was already all over.

And he kept saying to me know, they had just the early blossom, just the early blossom, and then he was proved right when this tree is in full bloom. There are quite a lot of blossom pictures on my phone and it's like I recently said many is 'cause I and this is the influence of Instagram which I hate. This is the Instagram thing of like oh I've seen so many beautiful pictures of blossom. This really beautiful moment looking at history and I want to capture the feeling of being able to see this in person and in 3D forever and you try and take the pictures like you see on Instagram and they don't work. So you have like 50 and they all look like this.

**Yeah yeah. That's interesting, it has like a sort of social dimension…**

If it's not, you know. Work that's actually kind of one of the reasons I included this, because this is not typical picture that I take as you are seeing it's an anomaly. These two are the kind of anomalies. I guess I do think it's interesting that living in a very beautiful part, London there is definitely, you know, do we have taste there was a guardian column about this this morning. Do we have taste anymore or is it just an algorithm you know, do we like the things that we like or is it just because somewhere Instagrams told us that we like rattan now and that peony's are nice flowers? You know, do we like blousey flowers or does Instagram like it?

Who knows. But I do think that there is a bit interesting. But, you know, sometimes you're a bit like, oh, that's an aesthetic that you know that I know is. You know a fashionable aesthetic or something. So you crack your phone out because it's because you, because the algorithm somewhere in the back of your brain is telling you to do. I don't think that's why I took this photo. I think I did this because I was just like really happy that there was still blossom season. And you know, you want to try and capture something of the feeling of being so sort of surrounded by these blooms, but I'm looking at it now. I'm lying, huh? It's like I think I might've. Instagrammed you know yeah, it's interesting again.

The natural world is. Is kind of seems within the aesthetic world of people. As something to be. To be used in a way almost like the Victorians are using the power of the water to power mill or something. Yeah, we're now using it to power our follower numbers. Or our digital economies, y

**Yeah, yeah, that's interesting. I mean, is that problematic in any way you think?**

Well, I mean, what's wrong with you? I instinctively feel like there is something wrong with that, but that's mainly because I think there's a lot wrong with surveillance capitalism. And you know? Jeff Bezos and all of his ilk. But that's like a slightly different thing from whether or not the relationship with nature is being damaged.

By that, I think it's way. If it's like, I definitely think that you know algorithms that knows better than ourselves and our consciousness through surveillance capitalism that's bad. But whether or not the only idea that somebody might pay attention in a different way because they understand because they found through different means that the beauty in the natural world and that they can see those moments of that around them, even in the city. You know that's not necessarily a bad thing. Like I don't know some east London hipster who's been watching pictures of those flower arches around very expensive Kensington bars there.

You know, pop up every spring suddenly sees something of that aesthetic in an actual blossom tree and understands that? OK, that's what's actually beautiful then. That's good, so I don't know. I have mixed feelings about that, but I am aware that it's changing the way in which we take pictures and the reasons for the take pictures. So yeah, that. That picture I can see, I can see that wasn't just necessarily me going got oh, this is lovely or gosh, this is worth taking picture of all I want to remember this for some reason that was me probably doing a bit of that and also doing a bit of oh if it's good I can put on Instagram, you know? Yeah, that's interesting. It's interesting that it's like, presumably with the blossom. That's something that's happened for many thousands of years. But then it's also snapshot. Yeah, you know, with a with a small less of a very particular human, yeah, time, it's it's a commodity in this particular moment somehow, yeah.

Yeah, but obviously everybody loves blossom. Blossom is amazing.

**Yeah, possibly overthinking it, but you know. I don't actually know if these pics should be adjacent to one another, but where is that on the left?**

That's Wick Woodland, so that is coming. So if you if you crossed the bottom of Hackney marshes, you're at the bottom of the marshes at the main road. Crossover and find the little like wooden pathway like walkway down to that path on the runs through the edge of woman. I think that that is that path that runs down that edge of Wick Woodland, probably far up sort of Olympic Parkway walking back down. Someone stole it and I think. Is this another one of those just nice walks at you? I love Wick Woodlands. I often take myself if I'm doing like a little under my husband doesn't like it, but I love forests and trees and I love you know being under a canopy of trees. Forest bathing. I love that.

And I think that Wick Woodland, with the exception of being able to hear the A 12, which you normally can hear in Wick Woodland. I do think it's quite a magic kind of place. It feels quite ancient. A lot of the time. It feels you know dark and mysterious and like you don't quite ever know exactly where each path is going to take you, except for the really big main ones around the edge and through the middle like you pick it, you pick a route and you'll figure it out kind of thing. And I really love that.

And I love the way it changes with the seasons. This would have been taken, I guess probably. Early May early mid May. Like spring proper, spring in the forest and you can still see the outlines of the child. Probably took this because I that tree really struck me the kind of boughs of that tree. And again, those kind of the hedgerow of whatever it is, it isn't cow parsley. Yeah yeah I love Woodland.

**Yeah really nice. Do you know how it came to be?**

So I don't. I doubt it. I I actually don't know the answer that question. I very much doubt that it is natural. I suspect it is a man-made Woodland, but I actually don't know when or how that would have been done. I know how Hackney Marshes was created. I don't know about Wick Woodland.

**I mean I guess it's a bit academic if you if you don't know. But what does this nagging feeling that it's not a genuine wild place make it any different or any less natural in any way?**

For me. Actually, probably not, but maybe that's a good. That's a really good question. Like do I feel differently about Woodland and I do like the bluebell wood behind my parents house in Derbyshire. Yeah, I suppose. Yes I do. They are different experiences to an extent. Box. I I don't think it's any less valuable for not being ancient. Uhm? In some ways I find it sort of more miraculous because it is there by the A12 between an industrial canal and the Olympic Park, and you know, new Spitalfields market on the other side of the river, and you know, it's a wonder in a way that it's there. So I think when I am there, I'm kind of like this. This is this pocket of something magic. Yeah, shouldn't be there almost and yet it is. So I don't definitely. I think it's like. Less real or not less natural for being man-made or newer somehow, yeah.

It's a different kind of magic maybe, but I also. I mean, I I'm very good at the willing suspension of disbelief. He's been very good at that and I like I like finding stories in the world and I like him. You know, I can imagine myself stories all the time. I'm a writer. That's kind of what I do. So you know, if I'm in Wick Woodland, it's very very easy for me to say it. Let's imagine that I am somewhere else. Let's imagine that I am in this particular story, or in this particular place or whatever, so I find that. I find that super easy to do. I don't think it's probably one of the reasons why I also do take quite a lot of pictures in some of these places, because in that picture you can.

You can really remind yourself how miraculous place that is because you could you can go is that London or is that Derbyshire very difficult to tell like you would be very hard push to make an accurate cool on that you know. Yeah, that's that's one of the the lockdown quizzes. You know when we were all doing lockdown quizzes this time last year. Every Thursday night everybody was on a lockdown quiz. Did with like my parents and my gold parents in which I took a lot of pictures of our favorite places. Scotland and a lot of pictures of Hackney. And I was like Hackney or Scotland really.

How did they do it? And and that was that everybody did about 50% like you know. Oh no, I didn't have any success with my grandparents are from this part Scotland. Technion and my parents are involved here, so it was you had to match the pictures to catch the dog. Cheryl Scotland and there were like 12 and some of them were like architectural and some of them. A lot of them were natural. A lot of them were of the river Lee and they people were just guessing you couldn't. You couldn't, you know.

So that's an interesting thing about the borders of the picture is that you can't hear the A12 and you can't see the fact that there might be something just out of shot that reminds you in like in which Woodland, there all the old bins like the City of London like bins that are scattered around the place, you know. Look them up, yeah yeah, the detritus. I never quite understand the Wick Woodland. My friend used to live in the really colorful block of flats. Just by Wick Woodland and every now and then he'd be like Oh yeah, there's another rave. We saw them all dragging in their sound equipment- like where and how. And you know I get that you know people camping there sometimes. I once I when I was like on a recent walk I over heard two people they would definitely smoking weed and they were like having a very deep political conversation that you know when you over here. Like just a snippet and I was just like whoa that is. That is deep where they've gone deep, whatever they're doing.

But it did feel very keeping with this kind of like otherworldly out of time kind of element in which Woodland I don't mind all of that 'cause it kind of it's part of it's little. Yeah times out of joint in Wick Woodland. Nothing makes complete sense in which Woodland that's nice. Yeah, even despite its ability, it's still facilitates that kind of. Yeah, we witness. There's something that if you was asking about ancient versus modern, then he taken the ancient Woodland and you take, you know, the kind of like. Folk folkloric I suppose kind of connections between land and time and society and you know kind of know I'm writing a folk horror at the moment. One of the things I'm writing about which is kind of all about this. These kind of ancient connections to the land and folk wisdowm and like Wick Woodland has something of a vibe of that.

But in a really urban east London way like there is something you know you you wouldn't if you suddenly discovered some kind of hipster. And festival in the middle of Woodland. You wouldn't be that surprised, you know, yeah, that's not coming up here. You know, I wouldn't be surprised if there is solstice rituals in there on June the 21st, like Stonehenge, Alwick, Woodland, you pick. It's that it has that kind of energy which Woodland? Oddly?

**Yeah, that's really interesting. Yeah, friend of mine did go wassailing. Just last autumn or whatever.**

So yeah, that stuff definitely does happen. Yeah, yeah, yeah, it's got that vibe this this one here is this.

**Where is this?**

I think. Well this is. Taking this from the filter beds again, this looks like one of the points and that's that's the very top end at the top end of Hackney marshes of the river, where the two parts of the River Lee kind of begin to merge just South of the Prince of Wales. That's around there and I think. I just loved the. The light on the water in the different vegetation, and again that little like window into a little world. Quite pristine. The world 'cause no one ever gets in this part of the river because he can't access it. It's not like the Hackney Riviera on that side of the river Lee, where you know in the summer there's loads people swimming and you're like it's so polluted? What are you doing like that? It's not ever canal boat but it's like this is just a little bit where it's still just a river. A little bit like further down, actually that other picture that you had in the Woodland pictures. That's that's the river you know, further down towards you know the South end of having marshes. And there are those moments on the river Lee on that side where you kind of go.

Gosh, it's just feels like you know. Just this isn't an urban river, this is just a real river for a second. OK, that's interesting. There is that distinction. Yeah, there's no canal boat. There's no industry, there's just water and banks and vegetation and birds. And you know wildlife. And like this Heron, or cornering or whatever, you know, yeah. And so that makes it more the less intervention and the less human activity there is, the more natural it is, even though it's effectively, you know, the same water. Yeah, I suppose I suppose that's the effect of like taking a picture, isn't it? So like you know, all kind of. You'll see that and if only you could see just how many pictures from the bridge at Daubney fields I take looking down the canal frame, but that's my favorite view. I absolutely love that. I I almost think of it every time I crossed the bridge. 'cause it's 'cause it stopped me every time. And it doesn't feel any less any less natural public canal boats in it. But something like this. I'm again. I'm kind of amazed that it's even there.

I'm amazed that that little pocket of something so unspoiled or that look so as well. I know that the water is still really polluted, but I think that patch of kind of those, all those green reeds in the middle of the water there really struck me. Like you know this, that doesn't happen in places that you've got any. You know boats passing or whatever, and I just sort of thought. Gosh, I love link that that you know this little pocket is here. I've never seen before, yeah, but also this pictures about the fact I've never seen it before, so this was maybe going Oh my God, I've never seen this view of the river, for I didn't even know this little section of the river existed because it's actually quite hard to find. I was in this different part.

The filter beds, and you know, there are still things to discover here. The natural landscape here. I think that's probably why I took this.

**Actually. Yeah, yeah, brilliant. But I think it looks to me like a fig tree in the foreground.**

It looks like a big tree. I've got no idea of it is, but it does look like one and I love like you know the kind of. Gorgeous serve fig leaf shapes going on there. I've no idea if it is a fig tree. Yeah I have one. I'm pretty much looking directly at one right now, which I know for sure is just. Yeah, which is kind of interesting as well because that's obviously it's not a. You know there are no native figured learns.

Yeah, I've got no idea what it is. I'm not very good at that. Kind of like you know, identifying trees by then. I used to be as a kitten or anymore and you learn about in primary school and you have all these trees in your garden. You get good but not in London. But yeah, it's cool. I certainly obviously liked the kind of you know play of light on the leaves and you know that little frame that that victory gives it. Can I run in a tour of Hackney? Will will move on now. So yeah, so this this is Abney Park. This is so actually the yeah the on the left is Abney Park Cemetery. The one on the right is just is on Hackney Marshes. Again, that's by the Green Bridge. That tree is just at the end of the green bridge near the cricket pavilion.

Yeah yeah, yeah yes I have any part cemetery. One of my favorite spots in the whole borough. I love every part cemetery again just for. You know casual strolling around of assassinated, you know? Yeah, I used to live our old, flat overlooked Abney Park Cemetery. It was on on the corner of Bovary Road and Manor Rd. There's like a big red brick kind of block of flats and we used to have a flat with a balcony that overlooked Abney Park Cemetery and I used to walk through it almost every day like I get the train down to London Fields for work and I'd walk home and walk back up starting in High Street and in through the big old sort of Egyptian. Victorian Egyptian gates on settings in my street and then walk through to the gates at the church and signed and I've now living where we live now and all the fields.

I don't go back very often. We did go back to go to the opticians or opticians are still on Church St so we went to book opticians appointments and did a walk all the way up. Sort of Springfield Parkway and across that way and then you know my husband coming back before cemetery so I feel very like it won't. It just is such a familiar and favourite spot for me. Now I have to make a journey to go to it, but I still do. And again, it's about that you know, I love that play of man and nature in Albany Park and history and time, and you know. I when I was when I used to walk through on my way home from work, I made a point for awhile like stopping at different grade every time in reading it like reading the name aloud kind of thing like remembering that was a person and often those Victorian graves.

The older graves, God, you can tell so much about somebody's life because you find out you know their wife’s name or their husbands name and how many children they had in about four of their children died before they were 10 and that they had a you know a shop in Spitalfields that made boots or whatever like this all on those tombstones. And how wealthy they were? Depending on how giant the Angel is, that's quite a bit. And it's atmospheric, and it's a bit creepy in the way that the light plays on those different passageways through it. Again, it's another place that you can go get lossed like just take a bath and see where you end up. So it's got that kind of like there's always something about magic about Abney Park Cemetery. That kind of feeling that you might stumble into. You know the story again, which I love. Yeah, it's extremely confusing place. Always find to try and work out like get your bearings.

Yeah yeah and I think it's almost designed like that. You're not supposed to really get your bags. You're supposed to just suddenly stumble across the Chapel in the middle and go, oh God, I'm here again. Am I? How did I get here again? You know, there's something very like, you know, Labyrinthine about Abney Park Cemetery, which I like in terms of you know nature and naturalness. Yeah, yeah, I suppose it's similar to to those other Victorian. Here are some things that people have built that have been reclaimed in one way or another.

**I don't know if you had any thoughts about how, how natural it is now, how much it represents a natural place or the presence of nature amongst the urban?**

See, I think it is one of the most wonderful, beautiful, the thing that makes Abney Park Cemetery beautiful is the fact that nature has been allowed to, you know do its thing. It has been. He's managed obviously any part cemetery is managed by a team of volunteers and it is now managed in such a way as to ensure that that sense of. A nature taking over is maintained like they don't pull back the vines from the graves and they you know they keep it safe and they keep the paths clear but they don't and they you know if trees are dying or whatever like it's it is managed in the same way that parks are managed, but it's managed in such a way that it isn't manicured and it isn't. No one's trying to tame it in the way that you would normally tame a park or a grave or whatever. Like of all the capital ring symmetries.

Yeah, who cares about cancel green or whatever it is? Who cares that Brompton Cemetery you can stand in place with no one cares about those ones because they are impressive, sure, and they've got all the angels and all the big tombed graves and all the mausoleums blah blah blah but they don't have, you know. This kind of atmosphere they don't have that they don't have nature anymore, really. They they just they just man-made and like I get your kind of question which is obviously this is a man made place. They cleared the land around a big house and they made a capital ring cemetery because they run out of space in central London Graves. So Once Upon a time this was a very ordered place, no longer. I like that I don't think it's any less natural because nature has. You know done the thing it does best over the last 150 years and not over the last 1000 right? That doesn't make a difference to the way that I see it as a natural place then despite. Is that nature being being managed? And yeah, the kind of dereliction being curated, yeah yeah, yeah, I don't mind that actually, because because again, I think it's so much better than it being being, you know, manicured like.

I also like having access to it. So if they I mean you know if they wanted to just let it go completely wild it as I mean pretty much rewilded if they wanted to let that go. OK, you know, take its natural progression that eventually I wouldn't be able to walk through that space and there wouldn't be that connection with the past that that graveyard represents. And it is still a working space. You know, you can still get yourself buried in there if you want to. I don't know that many spots, but you know, and there is still history to be learned about there.

That is it still a community space. There is still, you know. So I think that that's important too, and I think in London we are lucky to have spaces that we can access the like that. Anne, it is, you know. It's lovely to have things that aren't. Managed to be manicured parks but are that are somewhere between the park and the totally natural environment.

**You know, that's good to know. I'm going to move onto. I've put three pictures together here based purely on one thing. Which is birds.**

Yeah birds, bird life it I realized that I the number of times I've seen the signets and then our growing up the signal is up at. You know up near in upper class and the river flats in and I've always been on my bike so I haven't like. I mean like all the signals that take a picture because I'm always thinking about taking a picture and I was like, I should take a picture because I want to take a picture of that or me to take a picture but I've always been on my bike in late so I've just been like looking at him. But so imagine that there is also this one in the cygnets in this little gang. And then there was a heron too. I didn't actually take the picture. My phone was dead, but I would have taken a picture.

But yeah, I love the fact that we've got so much amazing bird life here. It's amazing, I love it.

**I mean, yeah, we’ve mentioned that these kind of bigger kind of structures, and even the trees being quite structural, and then things that will happen, happen slowly. You know, rather than individual plants, it's more about the kind of landscapes, whereas here these organisms are quite different to that. Yeah, what I mean are there are these kind of. Just again just kind of players in these people. Larger macro landscapes for you. Or are these integral part of nature?**

Yeah, I think these are a bit more integral. They occupy different little sort of place in my brain. I suppose an if for example if we have been doing this about like Derbyshire say or somewhere then you have had up see those pictures of rabbits. OK right? Yeah no like something. Yeah I I like I love the birds here because they are. We do share this environment with them. This is their habitats and I love this time of year where you do watch these little you watched the eggs hatch and this little family is going about and the ducks and the more hands in there and the Swans.

And you know with the woodpecker up at Millfields Park and

**oh really.**

Yeah I've seen it work. I couldn't catch him on camera. This was before we went to Norway but we were like Oh my God, it's the woodpecker!

**was that one of the green ones?**

Yeah. It was it was awesome. We were just like Oh my God there's a woodpecker. It's right here. So I know the bird life here is fantastic. It is, I suppose, you know. I I do like the foxes round here. I've got one of the boxes, I like watching the fox is doing their thing at night when they think we can't see them. But I don't see them in the same way that they're such urban animals now. And they feel to me. So kind of like A and you version of a box that's adapted to an urban habitats that isn't necessarily part of the natural environment anymore. It's dependent on an urban environment in order to survive.

I like the fact that this the Bird Life here you know is is so diverse and. Vibrant and you know. Doing its thing in. Water and sky and trees and stuff, you know. So the birds feel a little bit more wild Zora bit yeah. And of course they are living in an urban environment. You know, these are one of these is on the in fact one of these might be outside the borough. I think one of these and how Hamlets growth in one of these was taken on the canal down to Limehouse at Mile End. Yeah, so I think the one on the far left. Yes, I think that's going down to Mile End Park. Yeah, sorry, that is going out the bounds of the study.

I sent you one from there so anyway. Yeah, I think it does feel slightly more natural even though I know that these rivers canals are man made. You know it they they feel like they are living their lives according to the same rules that they would be living their lives if they were in a pond and. You know Derbyshire or Cornwall or whatever? Where is the foxes aren't you know, I know what foxes do when my village at home they do not nick your rubbish. They have their own prey to go and kill and eat and whatever. Whereas these birds are pretty much behaving as they would in in in, in, in in countryside environment. But in the city I'm sure that they are fed by lots of local children but. They're still pretty much doing their thing. Yeah.

**You mentioned the canals there.**

I've got a few a few canals pictures come. My favorite stop there. Yeah, so this is from the bridge across to the football fields and let you can see that one of these pictures was taken earlier than the other by the leaves on the trees and stuff. I love this view, I just I just I don't know it this is it, sort of. Sums up where I live to me if I'm if you would say pick a picture that says home to you it will be this one, like this view is that the one that says home to me.

You know if I'm going out into the marshes or up there or down over ever, I'm crossing that bridge and it's 3 minutes my house and I love it, I actually love it.

**In terms of, you know, nature or perhaps constituent parts of nature, what is natural about what we're looking at here?**

So one of the things I like about this view and looking at these pictures like this is I really like the fact that you say I like the frame of it. I like the fact that you're that there's that sense of a journey, right which I like in my pictures. You know you. It's a story that there's already a story being told because we're looking down river basically.

But I like the fact that there is that sky and water and land thing going on trees. I love the fact that so often you will see the sky reflected in the water. That is just something very beautiful about that to me. And I also love the fact I love the canal boats. Actually love the fact that I love the boats. I'm. I don't know whether that's because it's like the little I like being able to be like Oh my goodness, I wonder what it looks like inside like a dolls house? Or would I like to live in a canal boat tiny houses? How cool? But I also think it's 'cause I really like the people live in this environment like that. They are homes they are, you know that's brilliant. So there's something about people living in nature and much closer to nature that I really respond to.

And I feel grateful that that is the environment that I live in, that this is the part of London that says yes, we have 500 people that live on the water here, you know? Yeah yeah, that's important. So yeah, it's. Yeah, I also think it's for for canal. I mean you know this is not a canal on the outside of Birmingham is it? This is not a canal, that is. It once would have been, but it's much prettier than that. It's much more natural, shall we say then, that? You know, I like it, there's one of these canal shots that I want to talk about. This one on the left, yeah. That's so that's now we're in the Olympic Park, in the borough of Newham, but never mind. Yeah, that's a cool shot, isn't it? I I I also love. I think I only sent you one of these, but like that shot of Stratford at the end of the marsh is the kind of. The distant Spires of the city that we see here, you know, got Canary Wharf and you know from certain angles the city and like the Gherkin, over there and then Stratford to the South. And you know, I quite like that reminder that we are in a city to you know, I. If I really just wanted to live in a totally immersive natural environment, I wouldn't live in London. I'd live somewhere else. I like living in London. I like this city. I like living somewhere that is diverse and, you know, cultural and urban. And I like these moments in which those two things connect and meet. I think I can reset this picture be 'cause again, the reflection of the sky in the water struck me, I suspect. And I like the Olympic Park.

I think it's a really good piece of like urban design and you know it is urban design. It doesn't. I don't feel like the Olympic Park is a natural environment in the same way that I feel like Hackney Marshes or Walthamstow marshes and natural environment, both man-made ones, had a little more time for nature to do its thing, but I do think it's a great example of integrated. You know natural. Design into urban planning. So I'm it's always impressive. The Olympic Park? Yeah, yeah. Alright for recall correctly, it was. It's an inspiration for you when you're just anyway. Yeah, all the wild flowers and grass is and they do really good thing at the park is it's designed to look good all year. It is. It's been planted in a deliberate way. It's a garden, is just a massive garden. Basically various London. You know in Victoria Park plus the Olympic Park.

So I do see it's super differently. But I do like this this kind of, you know, there's the there's. There's the real urban towers peeking out from behind these natural. Sisters yeah,

**wonderful and I don't know how much more time you've got left.**

I've got till 6:30.

**Thank you. That's great. 'cause there's still loads of stuff here to talk about. Probably some of it. We might have kind of touched on already, but. I think there's probably a few things. Have I love this one on the left. Well, yeah, with the arrow, how cool is that?**

That's it, yeah, I mean physically that that's not not your own work. I know that we stumbled across that and we were walking up the other way and it wasn't obvious as we were walking up this path. We are walking from the opposite direction. The arrow is pointing and I said what's that like and the way you came around the corner. It wasn't totally obvious and then we realized it was an arrow. Then I kept and took a picture because I was like, oh, that's so cool, you know. That says there's the. There's the maze in the middle of Wick Woodland, some who was that? Was that a game? Was that child? Was that an immersive theatrical experience? Who knows, was is this a mystery to be solved?

My brain loves stuff like this, loves the idea that there are there are secrets, you know. Yeah, I haven't completely grown out of like famous 5 novels I read as a kid. Being like if I just hang out on enough remote islands. I will find a mystery like I should probably learn to sail because. I'll need that those skills when I'm chasing down smugglers. You know that I'm still that kid, somewhere deep down. That's really funny. I suppose I mean, it kind of affects the questions about you know nature in another way. You know human nature, and yeah. But yeah. And play die. To play to me that that arrow and I was very struck by by that in that kind of space that that these are spaces to be joyful into play into. Yeah, maybe there's something there that human nature and these environments that enable us to play.

**I suppose it links with this one on the right. This is another one where it feels. I mean, it's beautifully centered, with the sun coming through there,**

This one has areal story and sense of that journey. I think that there's the play of light would have been one of the reasons I took this that dappled light that you get, and there's another reason I like I, I yes, light, I think is quite important to me in natural environments and which is always obviously absolutely crucial for anything to actually grow is light. But yes, that must have been taken in April. I think that that one on the right 'cause nothings in leaf yet or it's just coming into leaf. Yeah, it's lovely and that must be in the middle of the Woodland looking down one of the parts. I think I must have just been wondering through different day, clearly to the one with the arrow.

**I love that you were coming from the wrong direction according to the arrow as well.**

I actually think probably my instinct would have been like oh, let's go follow the arrow. There was no let's go home. Yeah, but it's like if it's telling you to go somewhere you missed, yeah? Only the arrows someone leaves in the woods…

I do like that, I do like silver birch. I do like that kind of, you know. I like those little bits of Woodland where you've got those kind of white trunks. I don't know. It's just nice the light again and the kind of aesthetic appeal. Yeah, kind of. I think maybe it's more that it's like wait would lend itself is quite diverse, little bit of Woodland you can wander through the silver Birch bit and then you'll be in something that feels like you know much shadowy and older. And then you're in the big plane tree Ave like I do like the fact that there are lots of tiny little Woodlands in one space so. You know there is diversity even in this tiny little patch. It's more that I think. But you know, I don't. I'm always surprised, almost when I when I'm in the silver Birch bit I know never expecting it. Yeah, that's like, you know, there's there's. There's something about natural environments for me that are about discovery in about connection. And you know. And somehow I still get that here. These surprising environments.

**Do you feel that's the same for everyone? Is it a very personal thing or, you know, just everybody in your post code or who lives within walking distance?**

I very much doubt that people will necessarily be looking at it in the same way as me, and that I think is partly influenced because I I grew up in a very, very, very natural environment in which I, you know, my parents had a nice big garden I could play in. I could climb over the back wall and go to play in fields. Yes, landscapes and hillsides and whatever. So yeah, I was. I'm I'm I'm I'm hardwired to look at nature in that way, almost as a playground and as a place for imagination and. Space for, you know, I don't know. When I was a university student back at home and I don't know heart broken over some boy. My instinct. Wouldn't it wouldn't be to go to my bedroom. It will go to the top of the hill kind of thing, right?

That environment that I grew up in that shaped my emotional landscape plays out in the way that I see my landscape here and in the way that I appreciate it and use it. And you know and experience that. I think you know I have no idea if. You know? I would sincerely doubt that if I was to gather all of my neighbors on my street and said, hey guys, isn’t Wick Woodlands just magic? I don’t think they’d agree.

**Does having that deep connection? Do you think that makes you? You know, enact more ecological behaviors, or think about you know climate change or things like that when you're not in those areas?**

Oh what you mean? If I'm if I'm not connected to nature, do I think about nature you mean? But if you know, I mean you know is is it just something that you can just plug into and it's just something that's there or or you know, do you feel like you know influences how much you might recycle or something like that? Oh yeah, yeah totally. I mean yeah, I mean that that is. 100%. I mean, I don't think I have. I work in the environmental space. I don't think I would have worked in the environmental space necessarily. I mean, I, I might have done.

It's very difficult to be able to tell without the background that I had without the childhood I had. Without the, you know, the way in which I grew up and how important the natural world was to me in a very personal way, because I will never know what that experience would have looked like if I'd been an inner city kids. I've got no idea whether or not it would have meant that when. The opportunity to work on climate change came calling. I said yes, I want to do that. Yeah, yeah it's me I didn't, you know set out to do that with my career. I want to work in the arts and I still do lots of cultural stuff. But it was always a very implicit part of who I want. And then when the opportunity came to actually make a really meaningful difference, I took it.

Yeah, I don't. I it's impossible to know whether or not I would have done the same thing or have the same kind of relationship with. You know the value on a much bigger scale of, you know, our natural environment and the damage that we do and. You know the really complicated intersectional issues that are currently preventing us from doing anything about it yet. I don't know if, for example, somebody you know who's Hackney born and bred would have the same kind of reaction Zeta these dis environment or be have reactions that would make them go.

Oh my God, I'm so lucky to live in such a comparatively natural environment in an urban city. I must do more for the planet because I appreciate this. No idea. Environment environmental action is pretty privileged. Like you know, it's not. If you are worrying about how to get the next meal on the table, you are not worrying about whether or not vertical farming is the solution to, you know. Amazonian rainforest destruction, or whether or not you are. I don't know. Investing your pension in a climate. Appropriate fund, or, you know whether or not you're gonna take a recent even something as basic as if you take a canvas bag to the Co-op or not. Like you don't care if your main concern is how am I going to feed and clothe my children. So I really do believe that being able to take day-to-day action around environmental issues is something that is a privilege because it is not top of the list.

If you, if you've got basic needs to fill, you know, yeah yeah you can't. You cannot shop plastic free. And I did this for a blog post for a major environmental charity once, and like went past completely plastic free for months and then had to like record my experience of doing it. And I was basically like if you do not have a lot of money, this is impossible if you do not have Internet. This is impossible if you do not have time. This is impossible like. It's a privilege, so you know, yeah, we aren't getting a privileged part of the country.

There is a huge amount of huge disparity between people like me who live here and live in nice Victorian houses and work for environmental charities and people who may have lived here all their lives. So you do not have the kind of privilege than I do. So yeah, yeah, yeah. The hotel I don't know. It's it's really, really good to talk about it, son. It's interesting to, you know, hear that, hear you hear your take on there and hear how that works with with you know with these photos on these environments, and there's that scapes and the the kinds of times that you've had and will continue to have within them.

**Obviously I can't really go into it, but I'm talking to a quite diverse group of people.**

Yeah. I can't, I think that's why it's an interesting piece of research 'cause I can totally imagine that, and I know that my response to the environment here is totally shaped by the privilege that I hold living here in a diverse community. As one of the gentrifiers of this kind of community, you know, I've moved here partly because of this natural environment that I really enjoy battles. Yeah, I've made all sorts of choices in the way that I have conducted my life to mean that I'm taking these photos, like quite literally.

You know, so yeah, I think that of course I'm going to have a totally different relationship to it. Then somebody who's never once had choices at all, just in the way of their life. Do you feel like I mean a lot of photos we got here. The things in the natural world, things that have been there for you know some time or where or they think other things where the naturalist crept in. You know over over a period of time then we're not looking so much. When nature might be used as part of that gentrification, I don't know. I mean, do you feel? Do you feel if we look at sorry apart there on the right?

I mean that that's I mean, Victorian gentrification, but there's quite literally Queen Victoria being like the young, the poor people of East London need some land. Give them some land, make the park you know that's by the gift of the crown. I still think there are things on the gates of Victoria part that says stuff like that, yeah? Yeah, that that that is, there's the original gentrification of East London was the creation of Victoria Park for the good of the good of the people in the slums. So yeah, I mean that's, you know. Urban urban evolution and urban design, and you know, of course.

When you are developing areas to make money and you want to build your nice block of flats to self millions then you are going to invest in ways in which you can make those sellable, which is things like let's buy at the railway arches and put nice cafes in them and are let's make sure we've got green space and you know stuff like that and had any council is going to be aware of that as as a income generated for the borrower and blah blah blah. So yeah I mean it is. There is definitely a relationship. Between those two things definitely, definitely, definitely. And I do think that these kind of natural spaces hugely improved quality of life. They've certainly improved mine, and I think whether people are conscious of that or not. You know that is not just the sort of very concrete material or health benefit perspective, but from a sort of mental well being perspective, you know, natural environments cleaner environments have a positive impact, so you know, I think it's it's not necessarily a bad thing, but I do think that.

Of course there is a relationship between the way and so. For example, take the new Water Works project that they're trying to get off the ground up at the filter beds there. Kind of the new like you know. Sure, I'm following that crowdfunder sure they found 50 quid of my money. I would love a wild swimming filter bed pools. I'd love for that final bit of concrete to not be there anymore and to be able to have that connected up green space stuff. Yeah, but that's gentrification. Of course it is because there's demand for that kind of stuff, because here's me, going would love me too. I'd love to go wild swimming. But that is a project that if it gets off the ground, that's big. If I I'm confident would have benefits for the whole community, but most people who live in here do not give a shit about that. To be quite frank, do they really? You know it's like not, and I say it's interesting 'cause it because once it becomes politicized space or it's owned by by one group, I guess there's quite a lot of opposition. Yeah, exactly. And you have to be very careful about democratizing access to these kinds of spaces.

And you know which is, you know. One of the reasons why something like Victoria Park so this happened. It was about democratizing access to greenspace, yeah? But in a very Victorian way, you know? Yeah yeah, yeah, it kind of reflects those, you know, big rolling vistas of those kind of a, you know, yeah, ability brown, kind of landscape. It looked like it could have been designed by probably wasn't. I don't, maybe it was. I don't know. It was designed by the same people who did Hyde Park. I think wasn't it's late model, right? And they took like the pagoda from the Great Exhibition like the pagoda is from the Chinese pavilion at the Great Exhibition. Like it's quite cool but sort of a bit is very Victorian philanthropy, isn't it? The whole of the whole of Victoria Park is very Victorian.

Philanthropy like that, water by that water fountain looks amazing from a distance when you get close you're like oh God, this is what is this? Like I don't know, you know some philanthropist name all around the top and like clean water for the masses like well you know maybe sell out their sewage systems but you know fine build fancy fancy name on it. Yeah, that's that's one way of engaging with.

**Thank you. It's really good to talk about all of that gentrification stuff. And it's yeah, it's interesting how how you know, like we talked about the thread of history. And how the intersections between the human and the natural throughout time**

And this is a part of that. This is a city, you know, these are natural environments in a way, but we are still part of the changing urban landscape and force all aspects of that landscape change with it, you know.

**I just want to bring up some of these ones with quite Moody skies**

This sky, I know. That's why I sent you this and I was like, oh, look at that. I just sometimes absolutely love the way that light just before a storm you know, storm clouds want I've always loved that ever since started so that's why I said that it was just like Oh yeah, look at that. OK, nice, very nice is that?

**That looks Instagram ready.**

I think I must have actually put that in turn 'cause that ones a square. It gets saved as like a square, yeah?

**So what I mean is this. You know we're looking at quite manicured bit of turf there. What what's natural about this?**

This has been sky I I'm gonna actually see. I think I did put on Instagram in a let me let me know it was lost on Instagram and I wrote all kinds of sky going on this week that was guys. So if you want to follow me on Instagram most of London may still be every now and then I'll do a story and then I'll put the music. Kate Bush is Big Sky, love Kate Bush and I'm like oh look it's English sky. I just love I, that's why I took that I I love. Sky is in clouds and. How fast they are, and that's one of the things I do really like about the marshes, is that you get you know. And I remember this from childhood standing in my parents garden and being so conscious of the entire Dome of the sky and you don't get that in London really. You know there are buildings everywhere. You can't appreciate the full sky. You need to be somewhere vast and empty, and on Hackney marshes, you get that. So though I like Hackney marshes... I mean I'm very appreciative of having a big empty space for picnics and things… Hackney marshes isn't, you know, amazing in itself, it's what it has around it and that opportunity to appreciate the sky and the winter sunsets are amazing. You know, 'cause you get the whole sky?

**Yeah, yeah. Wonderful, that's that kind of big macro elemental stuff. I suppose in a similar sort of vein there are these couple of pictures that was that one on the left.**

That's that's what you were sort of thing. Yeah, so why would I have taken that? That would have been the kind of like. There's Stratford peopling the bottom of that, and that that's a cricket match, isn't it? I've just been like, oh, it's so not I that would be also being like. It's lovely that people are outside enjoying nature.

Like I like the fact that I live in the kind of place where people go out and play cricket on the marshes. You know that would have been me appreciating that kind of thing, but it's, well, it's one of the few pictures that has anybody in it. Yeah, that's very true. On it. Yeah, people in them. Just generally I don't really do that unless it's like in less. It's like my friends or a party. But yeah, I think that would have been me kind of being. Yeah, so pleased to be part of a community in which people use these spaces. Yeah, and that's a nice thing about. It's actually it is not, and you know it isn't it isn't. It's natural space to an extent covered in grass, sort of. It's a green space, if not a natural space, but it is designed for people to use, and people are always using it. There are cricket games or football matches or rugby matches or kickabouts or picnics or whatever. It's a social space that is actually used by all kinds of members of this community and very very diverse Members of this community.

And you know, young and old and that's kind of awesome. I think cool, yeah, so that's the naturalness is is almost the. Lack of anything that's built up almost. It's not like as you know, and and you know there is. There is space in which to be and democratize space. Perhaps you know. And it's not a park that's going to ask you to walk around, its manicured pathways or sit on its benches or whatever. You can play sports and there are going to be goal posts up for you to do that. Or you can walk across it. Or you can stick with your mate so you can have a picnic. Or you can kind of just do what you can be whatever you want it to be. And I think that is really nice.

**Wonderful I'm, you know, I I realize I've actually doubled up on a couple of these these photos, so I think these ones might be the only ones that we've not talked about.**

I don't know if there is anything extra that we haven't really discussed that these things would have taken the one on the right because it's so tiny it didn't come out in the photo, but I remember this. I was taking it being amazed by it 'cause there's the Shard through there. Oh, really, I just see that there's the city in the Shard just through there. And I guess if. Caught that glimpse and again being like whoa. I'm in London, but also I'm here like, yeah, you know. And then there's that there's that kind of avenue of plane trees and lake Woodland that's there's cathedral like that that Ave you know that's a vaulted roof of tree branches there and instead right which I love the roadside. Yeah, that was that. Well, not the road, that's the one that's by the towpath. OK but yeah. So just on the other side of those trees, is that a path? But I won't ever walk down that bit the towpath because I can walk down this bit, which is always empty and bigger and has that amazing. Yeah, vaulted roof of tree boughs, which I just love.

**Yeah, yeah. Pretty, and I think that I mean, yeah, that brings us to the end of all of the photos and and really my questions so. Before we kind of closes today, do you feel like we've we've gone into loads of depth and loads and loads of different things actually? But is there anything else that your mind's been triggered by? Or any other thoughts that you've had about about nature in Hackney?**

I think one thing that I probably would have taken a photo of that I didn't because I was on my bike was was I love this time of year for all the wild flowers that exist here and that's the one thing you probably would have seen had I been walking as bird on my bike is that there are. Particularly in the streets around, there are so many you know wildflower plantings in little tiny gaps between you know houses and pavements and around tree bases. And you know, by the bridge or just anywhere that it's part of the ‘10 times greener initiative’ that exists around here in which there are, you know, Community efforts to. Just find tiny spaces for nature to thrive on these streets, and I've just always been on my bike so I haven't got my phone out, but you would have seen pictures of those kinds of wildflowers. Have just been like, you know, gorgeous recently, so they're all planted up with grasses and wildflowers. They've really come into their own, and that's just lovely.

They've kind of colors and the you know, the sense of community that exists behind those moments. There's also lovely to me that these kind of tiny little. Beautiful. Micro moments of of nature are also there because a community is decided that they want them and have done that together. Yeah, I love that. Yeah, I guess I guess. Yeah, it's a community that values in some way, you know on different levels and for different reasons, but this is a community in this little tiny set of four or five streets. You know, there's been community initiatives that actively seek to value nature. And that's nice. Yeah, yeah yeah, that's the one picture you're probably missing from the last couple of couple of weeks. It's funny 'cause I actually have it.

**We're doing something at work at the moment. Which was, you know, take some photos on your lunchtime walk and share them with everybody. And I'm pretty sure that I can't remember if it was on one of those roads. But I was in that area. And yeah, I have a photo of loads of daisies and poppies and stuff.**

That's all 10 times green initiative. Yeah, it's really nice. Really, really nice. There's a crowd funded, gardener, and she works like X number of days months. Then she has certain days that she sets up and works with anybody who wants to like come hang out in the Saturday and do community gardening projects and stuff. It's cool. Yeah, really cool. Yeah, really nice is that?

**I mean is there anything? Anything wrong with that? Is that is that an example of gentrification in a way?**

Possibly, although it's mostly centered around the estate. So it's sort of. I think it was sort of seeded there and it spilled over into our streets because, you know, and they've got that they've like, petitioned the Council to get rid of the community garden to move the community garden.

And so I would normally say yes, but for the fact that that initiative is come from arguably the least gentrified part. Of this tiny pocket, yeah, as opposed to from the people like me who've moved into it. Do you see what I mean? Yeah, yeah, yeah yeah, it's more organic itself. Yeah, it was more organic. Like you know initiatives begun by that estate to, you know, put like more insects homes in and they planted poppies and they do something else while ago orchards. They had they they sort of planted a tiny orchard and grew from there and then they got some funding and you know. They then got crowdfunded and then the rest, so I I would agree it would probably be a gentrification project if it hadn't come from there. Yeah, fasting. But it kind of came from.

I don't know, are arguably a community that have a degree more ownership of this part of London than I do say. It's interesting, yes. Intersectional issues that questions around nature and environment.. Yeah, I'm sure you could probably teach me a thing or two about that.