

Laura Ellen Bacon: *Into Being* Teacher's Notes

About this resource

This resource is for teachers to support exploration of the exhibition [Laura Ellen Bacon: *Into Being*](#) in the Chapel. It contains information about the artist and exhibition, enquiry questions and ideas for creative activities. Teachers can adapt as appropriate to their group's needs and key stage. Further ideas and playful activities can be found in the family activity bags in the gallery.

About the artist

Laura Ellen Bacon is a British artist based in Derbyshire who makes large scale sculptural installations from natural materials. Her work is inspired by organic forms such as cocoons, nests and seed pods.

Bacon has been working with willow for 20 years and has developed her own unique method of making. She constructs her work alone and entirely by hand, becoming deeply absorbed in the making process. The durational act of making allows time for contemplation and for memories to surface. Bacon describes how these thoughts then become woven into the fabric of the sculpture.

Bacon makes preliminary drawings of her sculptures and then uses the willow to 'draw in space', creating sweeping 3-dimensional forms which spill out into the surrounding gallery space.



Laura Ellen Bacon making *Into Being* (2025).
Photo © Scott Merrylees

About the exhibition

Into Being is an immersive sculptural installation made from Somerset willow. The work has been made onsite specially for YSP and in response to the architecture of the 18th century Chapel. *Into Being* took eight weeks to make and is made of approximately 50,000 sticks of willow. The willow was soaked for 7-10 days to ensure it was pliable enough to work with. There are some fallen beech branches within the work, which were included as a support structure at the beginning of the making process.

Laura Ellen Bacon's work evolves instinctively as it is made, growing much like the natural forms she is inspired by. The shapes and forms of the work feel familiar, as they echo those found in nature. The title of the work '*Into Being*' was chosen because the artist felt that through the repetitive process of making, she had willed the work into being. As the mass of willow reaches out across the gallery space, it is possible to imagine the sculpture beginning to move and taking on a life of its own.

Once the exhibition has finished, *Into Being* will be deconstructed and parts of the work will be placed around the Park to create natural habitats for the local wildlife.

Before your visit

Before visiting YSP with your class, prepare your pupils/students by discussing their expectations:

- Think of somewhere where you might have seen art before.
- Have you ever been to an art gallery, library or museum before?
- What do you think you will see?
- What can you do in an art gallery? What might you not be able to do?
- How will you need to behave as a group and as an individual? (This is a good opportunity to refer to the [YSP Code](#).)
- What should you take with you?
- How might sculpture look differently in an indoor gallery compared to outdoors in the landscape?
- Research the work of Laura Ellen Bacon and write down your initial thoughts about her work.
- How does Laura Ellen Bacon's work make you feel and why?
- What do you find interesting about her work?
- What do you think the artist would like us to think about?

Enquiry questions

Here are some questions to start a conversation with your class:

What do you first notice about the sculpture?

Stand next to or inside the sculpture. How does it make you feel?

Take a deep breath. What does the sculpture smell like?

What shapes and forms can you see? What do they remind you of?

What is the sculpture made from?

Look closely at the patterns and textures running through the sculpture. How do you think the sculpture was made?

Notice how the outer surface of the sculpture appears smooth, whereas the inside surface undulates and folds. What might be the meaning behind this?

Consider the relationship between the sculpture and the architecture of the space. Why do you think the artist has positioned the sculpture in this way?

Laura Ellen Bacon describes how memories and thoughts that occur during the making process become woven into the fabric of the sculpture. Is it important to preserve memories? Why?



Laura Ellen Bacon, *Into Being* (2025). Photo © India Hobson

“I use natural materials, en masse. It is my goal that my work might bring some intrigue into both natural and built environments, creating work that might serve to remind us that nature can still surprise us.”

Activity

Choose an interesting viewpoint of the sculpture. Use a pencil to make a continuous line drawing. Start at one end of the sculpture and follow the lines and curves. Don't take your pencil off the page until you have completed the drawing.

Move to a different position and repeat the activity. Compare your drawings. How are they different and how are they similar? Compare your drawings with the person next to you.



Laura Ellen Bacon, *Plume* (above) and *Swell* (2025).
Photo © India Hobson

Activity

Laura Ellen Bacon uses willow to 'draw' in space. Hold out your arm and point your forefinger. Follow the lines of the sculpture with your finger and make an imaginary drawing in space.

Extend this activity by attaching a ribbon to a stick and hold it out as you follow the lines of the sculpture. Watch how the ribbon moves and curls to create a fleeting 3D drawing. You can find some ribbon sticks in the family activity bags in the exhibiton.

Outside the gallery or at school: Attach a piece of willow charcoal to the end of a long stick. Find a natural object and draw it on a large piece of paper at arm's length. Move your arm from the shoulder to create sweeping shapes and curves.



Laura Ellen Bacon, *Into Being* (2025). Photo © India Hobson

Activity

Look at the drawings on the balcony. Observe the different shapes, lines and textures. What do these drawings remind you of? What do you think inspired the artist to make these drawings?

Find an object from nature or an interesting part of the landscape. Fill your page with the patterns and shapes you see. Now fill in your pattern with different textures and lines.

Laura Ellen Bacon becomes absorbed in her work through the repetitive act of making.

Try and switch off from other noises and distractions and enjoy the drawing.

Notice how you feel.

Where does your imagination take you?

What will you remember from today?

Back at school

After visiting the exhibition and exploring Laura Ellen Bacon's work in more depth, what do you think about her work now?

Has your opinion changed?

Has anything surprised you?



Photo © Jonty Wilde

David Nash: 49 Square (2013) Lower Lake

49 Square comprises 49 Himalayan birch trees planted seven feet apart in seven rows of seven. This particular species of birch was chosen for the bark's strong white colour. When fully grown, the trees will form a white cube on the lake's embankment. David Nash is interested in geometric forms, particularly the cube, the sphere and the pyramid, and how geometry can offer a way of understanding nature.

David Nash uses natural materials to make his artworks. What are the similarities and differences when compared with Laura Ellen Bacon's work?

Think about the value of an artwork. Do you think a sculpture made from natural materials has the same value as one that is made from man-made materials? Why?



Photo © David Lindsay

Heather Peak and Ivan Morison: Silence – Alone in a World of Wounds (2021) Upper Lake

Silence is a sculptural space made of natural materials including timber and thatch. It acts as an extended, open pavilion, creating a place for solitary, silent communion with the natural world. The work invites us to think about our connection to the environment, encouraging us to take active steps to protect it. Made entirely of natural materials, the work will eventually degrade and return to the earth from which it came.

When the exhibition *Into Being* ends, Laura Ellen Bacon's sculpture will be deconstructed, and sections of it will be placed around the Park to create habitats for local wildlife.

Consider the environmental impact of making art. How can art be more sustainable? Is this something you consider when making artwork? Why?

Find out more

To find out more about YSP, explore the resources on our [YouTube channel](#) with your class. Here you will find short videos about the Park highlighting the unique relationship between sculpture and the Yorkshire landscape, plus a library of videos and artist talks from previous exhibitions.

Explore YSP's world-class sculpture collection and hear from artists and curators on our digital guide, available to download via the [Bloomberg Connects app](#).

Discover more teacher resources on our [Activities to Inspire](#) page. Check out the [Exploring Sculpture Resource](#) which will help you unpick any sculpture at Yorkshire Sculpture Park.

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