

Welcome to this audio introduction of Nesting, by Emergency Exit Arts.

For this installation, you are invited to converse with artist Stephen Stockbridge as he weaves a large, nest-like sculpture which will evolve throughout the festival. Due to Covid-19 security conditions, you will not be able to touch the sculpture itself. However, in order to appreciate how his material feels and works, Stephen will invite you to touch an example of the material used to make the nest, which he will mould into a hoop, or garland shape for you to take away. The material that Stephen uses are thin, springy reeds of a willow tree, called "withys". The willow source itself is natural and sustainable, its harvesting supporting bio-diversity. When wet, the withys are mouldable into arc shapes that can be tied, or bound together. When the withy's then dry, they become strong and stable. As such, the shapes and structures created using withys are often rounded and curved, much like the sculpture that Stephen is creating. It's a large, round nest, as tall as a person and as big as a car. The nest symbolises home and connection - how we are all woven together, and stronger that way. Stephen describes the way that he works as "raw and spontaneous, like a bird weaving a nest". Although he has an idea in mind for the look of the sculpture, the ultimate shape and form of the work is as much defined by the feel and behaviour of each individual withy, as his own vision. Stephen is happy to talk to you about this process as he works, including his observations on how the feel of the material in the hand helps to create a sense of calm and grounding. Additionally, as you arrive at the site for Nesting, you will meet 2 of the artist's colleagues, Patrick and Anna, both seated at individual tables. First, Patrick will invite you consider what kind of animal might inhabit such a large nest? It could be real, or imagined...however monstrous! He will then invite you to draw an image of your animal, or would be happy to draw it for you. Next, Anna invites you to reflect on your experience of lockdown, in particular any insights you have gained of yourself, or others. Both drawings and insights, drawn, or written with and on natural and sustainable materials, will be rolled into balls that are placed within the safety of the nest.

