

Welcome to this audio description of Sociable Weaver, by Natanya Mark and the Rosebud Centre for Girls.

The Rosebud Centre for Girls is a support centre for young women aged 11 to 19.

Natanya Mark is a creative practitioner interested in collective and intuitive making. In 2016, Natanya initiated the first series of creative workshops to be hosted at the Royal National Institute of Blind People. She continues to develop an Arts Programme at RNIB on a voluntary basis.

Natanya's artistic practice often involves collective weaving processes to fabricate community closeness. Natanya enjoys re-purposing throwaway materials – here, in the Sociable Weaver, margarine tubs have been transformed into looms, and plastic bags have become weaving materials.

To introduce the Sociable Weaver, Natanya writes: *This collaborative installation is woven from plastic bags whilst nesting in our homes during lockdown. These up-cycled nests celebrate a coming together.*

For the Sociable Weaver, each participant was invited to create a "Solidarity Square". There are approximately 40 squares, with some participants having made more than one. The exact shape and dimensions of a Solidarity Square depends on the materials used to create the looms, such as margarine tubs, or egg boxes. Yarn is made from plastic bags cut into thin strips which are tightly woven together within the re-cycled loom. The variety of plastic bags used in each individual weave provides a multitude of colours, with some recognisable shades – Sainsbury's orange; local shop blue, or bin-bag black. Some pieces have symbols threaded into the weave – a heart, star, letter, or initials. A pencil-sized stick threaded through loops at one end of the Solidarity Square allows a plaited handle to be attached, so that it can be hung. Some have woven tails attached that dangle and sway in the breeze, like kite tails.

To provide a home, or nest for the various Solidarity Squares, Natanya has taken inspiration from African Sociable Weaver birds, that build huge, hive-like nests in trees in which to live as a colony over many years. The nests take on many shapes, with holes dotted all around for birds to fly in and out of. For this

installation Natanya has woven 3 main sculptures from which to hang the individual squares. The design of the sculptures evolved over 3 workshops, in which members of Rosebud worked with Natanya to conceptualise the structures.

These 3 sculptures are installed at various heights within a tall tree, in full foliage. They are also created using thick strips of yarn, that are again cut from plastic bags. One such sculpture is basket-shaped, and woven predominantly from orange Sainsburys plastic bags. The "basket" hangs from an arched branch high up in the tree, and is arranged upside down, so that individual squares dangle down from its hollowed-out space right down to floor level. Another sculpture is woven from local shop blue bags. It's made from two pieces that, when viewed from a certain angle make a heart shape, with squares attached to their surfaces, as well as dangling beneath. This sculpture is installed at the apex of two branches, just above head height, with the base of the heart shape coming down to floor level. Highest up in the tree, over 4m high, nest-like honeycomb structures, with black bin bag lining at mouth of each nest, provide a home to more squares.