



Intro

Introduce the outline topic, nature and basis of your research project(s) and / or the context or problem? Can you give it a title?

## 1. Introduction

This project explores the idea of Environmental Identity within urban landscapes, with an overall aim to create objects which celebrate the beauty that can be found in these spaces along with the unseen nature in them too. A personal project exploring my own hometown of Croydon, a post-war creation stigmatised as a 'crap town'. Croydon has a mixture of urban, industrial and natural landscapes which I've revisited and explored, finding the overlooked beauty that lies in each one. This idea of noticing and appreciating your surroundings then extends further into discovering an appreciation of the everyday.

Two of my three outcomes from this body of research encourage a sense of interaction, making the viewer want to look closer at the objects which mirrors the idea of looking closer at your local, ordinary landscape to find the overlooked beauty in them:

**Poplar:** A hanging mobile piece which creates subtle movement and sounds and allows the viewer to walk into it. The aim of this piece was to generate that feeling of being within an urban city setting, with large geometric ceramic forms hanging higher over the viewers head, and the smaller, more intimate natural details lower down on the ground reflecting that exist at a lower, more local level. My plan was to include more decorative details which spoke specifically to my personal experience of Croydon, including colours and patterns I found on my walks around Croydon as well as specific natural details stemming from my own childhood experiences on Mitcham Common. This piece presents both the urban and natural world existing together in harmony, with an emphasis on small details of beauty within both the urban and natural sections.

**Cronx:** A set of 3-5 large hexagonal, curved vessel named after my hometown explored the idea of exploring and seeking new perspective on the everyday, ordinary urban landscape many of us live in that has a hidden character. The hollow nature of this piece hopes to encourage people to look into and around the vessel, embodying this idea of exploring for before unseen beauty within our everyday life. The vessels were going to be displayed to subtly follow a bath way, each on leading on from another, reflecting the idea of exploration and journeys which has been one of the main ways I've collected my research and opened up this idea of finding a new perspective on the everyday. Each vessel was going to have different variations of colours and details which stem from my findings on walks around my hometown.



What?

What are you trying to find out and learn through the research ?  
What are the **research questions** you are asking? What new insights or understandings are you seeking?

## 2. What?

**What does Environmental Identity mean and what does it mean to be born/ or raised in an urban landscape? Particularly London.**

People tend to incorporate where they were brought up and live into their own sense of identity, which I think is very true for Londoners. In terms of environmental identity, Londoners are very connected to the urban spaces around us as they're often what we experience the most, even though London is split almost 50/50 between urban/industrial spaces and green spaces. I wanted to explore this split of landscapes and our personal connections to the places we live in.

**How does our disconnection with nature impact us, why is a relationship with nature so important and what is being done in London to improve this connection with the public and support the city's green infrastructure?**

According to a Natural History Museum report 'children connected with nature are more likely to be interested in their environment, will want to enjoy it and save it', which highlights the importance of creating a stronger connection with natural spaces in particular in cities and towns where some people are less connected with these places. Experiencing nature is important for our own health and for creating a sense of responsibility for protecting the environment. Throughout this project I've tried reading different articles and pieces of research that investigate city dwellers relationship with nature. Interestingly, people in deprived areas of cities are less likely to experience less nature in comparison to people from wealthier areas. This led me to start investigating the green infrastructure in Croydon and my own relationship with the nature in my local area.

**Rediscover my own hometown from a new perspective, to find beauty within the urban town as well as re-connecting with the natural space that often go unseen.**

A personal journey of reconnecting with my own local natural landscape (Croydon), getting in touch with and helping volunteering groups to seeing the importance of connecting with and supporting our natural spaces in a very practical sense to then interpret this in a more conceptual way within my ceramic work.

How can I rediscover my own local area from a new perspective? I want to investigate and explore what I can find within Croydon that I might have never noticed before. How can I find beauty within my everyday settings even though when you think of Croydon beauty would not be the first thing that comes to mind.

Discover Croydon's history that I know little about. Seeking to find out more about its post-war roots, its architecture, social stigma that surrounds the town and its unique character. Croydon seems to have a very badly, widely spread public reputation for being a terrible place and a bit of a concrete jungle, but where does this concept come from? Does it come from the people that live there or other who have never experienced Croydon for what it really is? What is Croydon like as a place from a personal perspective, what gems can be found on a walk around the city?

Take inspiration from the physical landscape (**both urban and natural**) to inspire form, colour and textures of work to situate the work within Croydon though it may not be obvious.



Why?

What are the aims and objectives of the research?  
What are you hoping it will achieve? Why is it relevant and worth finding out and who (if anyone) might benefit or what might change as a result?

### 3. Why?

By presenting the hidden beauty and nature that can be found within my own urban environments, showing both urban and nature living in harmony in this set of objects and installations the project aims to encourage people to slow down, appreciate and notice the beauty and nature that can be found in urban towns/cities. This aim then extends further to encourage a celebration for unnoticed details within the ordinary everyday, hopefully leading people to rediscover their own local landscape.

I believe that this message of encouraging an appreciation of the everyday is important as modern lives in cities can be so busy, especially in London, so we can often disregard our local environment. In my research I have been trying to rediscover my own town from a fresh perspective, despite it having a poor social reputation, and I have then embodied my findings and this idea of exploration and journeys into the objects/installations. I'm hoping that these pieces will then demonstrate the importance of taking the time to appreciate what we have around us in our ordinary day to day lives, especially in the urban and natural landscape.

Although this project is based around Croydon, so may resonate more with people from Croydon/South London, I believe the message should hopefully relate to a wide range of people, especially city folk.



How?

What methods will you use to help answer your research questions?  
How are you approaching undertaking the research? What tools and / or equipment will you need?

### 4. How?

#### Visual research

One of my main methods of collecting visual research was photography, when going on a series of walks around Croydon I photographed different forms, patterns, colours and general settings, searching for moments and specks of beauty that never stood out to me before. These photographs were then the main source of inspiration for drawings and initial ceramic tests. I found that using Adobe Illustrator to make digital drawings I was able to retrieve different colours and forms from various photos which then helped me translate my findings into 'keys' which then helped me design my ceramic pieces. Going on different journeys through urban and natural landscapes helped me develop two different colour/form/texture schemes, one thing that also helped me develop

natural forms was collecting leafs, twigs and other natural matter that I found on my journey.

Medium for research:

Camera, Sketchbooks, Adobe illustrator and graphics tablet for digital drawings, GPS Walk mapper, collecting natural matter, journeys around Croydon.

## **Contextual research**

### **Series of walks**

Urban-

With the aim of gaining a new perspective of Croydon, a place I'd walked around hundreds of times, I went on a series of different walks looking for visual aspects I hadn't before noticed, in particular looking for interesting forms, colours and textures that you wouldn't associate with Croydon based on its bad reputation. One walk was focused on finding interesting architecture in the town centre, I tried taking route around town that I wouldn't normal take too to try encouraging a new perspective. Two of my walks were then focused more on colour and patterns, trying to find a colour scheme I could reflect onto my work that went beyond concrete grey. These walks really helped me to develop this idea of gaining a new perspective of our everyday local environment.

Natural-

My research began at looking at my immediate local surrounds, which included Mitcham Common which lead me to visit it on three occasions during this project to collect visual research. Visiting the common made me curious to investigate what other natural spaces exist in Croydon, and it turned out there were plenty. I visited a selection of parks within Croydon including Wandle park and Queen's garden, and later went on to investigate the River Wandle which runs through South London by visiting Wilderness Island. Finding out how much nature exists within Croydon and South London helped me to see the importance natural spaces should hold within our city and how a co-existence between natural and urban spaces should be strived for. This led me to incorporate both landscapes within my work as one.

B&Q visit

In January we were asked to take a research trip. For mine, I went to B&Q, a place that sells construction materials in a very industrial feeling building but is also a garden centre, and tried to look at it as a microcosm of Croydon – a place that combines industry and nature in the same place. When I arrived at the outdoor gardening section was very empty and felt very neglected in comparison to the well-stocked industrial hardware section of the shop. To me this reflected how Croydon does have a lot of available natural spaces, but in general they are neglected and forgotten, overshadowed by the overwhelming urban feel of the town centre. From the research trip I created digital drawings which abstracted and highlighted the small bits of nature I did find in B&Q, aiming to take something unseen and forgotten and create something new from it. This trip reminded me of how Croydon does have green spaces, but they often go neglected or forgotten, so in my project I should try to highlight the natural side of Croydon too.

Volunteer groups

An important part of this project for me was to personally reconnect with the nature that exists in Croydon and to begin to celebrate its beauty in my own life so I could then reflect that in my work. I reached out to The Friends of Mitcham Common and The Conservation Volunteer's group within Croydon. Through these connections I participated in a litter pick on Mitcham Common with a small group of other volunteers and also went Hazel Coppicing in King's Wood with The

Conservation Volunteer's group where I was taught about the importance of biodiversity within the woodlands that the volunteers work helps. These experiences illuminated the importance of increasing community awareness and engagement with local green spaces.

### **Exhibitions/ Artists**

Welcome to LDN and Audrey Krako - This exhibition celebrated London for its character which I loved and wanted to incorporate in my own work. Krako's photography focuses on moments that may go unseen by by-passers in their everyday life. She focuses on colour as a way of portraying beauty in scenes on the streets of London. This message then transcended into my own work.  
<https://www.audreykrakophotography.com/east>

Edge City: Croydon. National Trust - This exhibition I researched explored what is special and cherished about ordinary, suburban places like Croydon, places that are not often thought of as rich in beauty or culture.  
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/edge-city-croydon>

James Rigler - Rigler's ceramic work has an industrial yet colourful feel, and his use of space and form to portray a sense of movement/journey is something that I wanted to explore with my hexagon vessels.  
<https://www.westdean.org.uk/study/school-of-arts/blog/visual-arts-1/visiting-artist-james-rigler>

Valeria Nascimento – When designing and constructing the mobile Nascimento's installation work helped me consider the execution of these pieces.  
<https://www.valerianascimento.com/projects>

### **Historical research**

Concretopia, John Grindrod. 2013

Explores postwar Britain and the towns that saw huge architectural change come about at the time, with the creation of thousands of prefabricated homes and estates, and challenged the consequential 'crap town' stereotypes places like Croydon were burdened with due to this rapid rebuild. I also went on a guided walk around Croydon with John Grindrod called Polaroids of Croydon. Both the book and the guided walk taught me a lot about Croydon's architectural and social history.

The Country and The City, Raymond Williams. 1973

Discussing the changing attitudes and relationship with the city and country as portrayed in English Literature.

Croydon. The High-rise and Fall. Documentary, 2016.

Exploring Croydon's post-war history, architecture and social stigma.

Disconnect from nature and its effect on health and well-being. A public engagement literature review. Natural History Museum. [www.nhm.ac.uk/content/dam/nhmwww/about-us/visitor-research/Disconnect%20with%20nature%20Lit%20review.pdf](http://www.nhm.ac.uk/content/dam/nhmwww/about-us/visitor-research/Disconnect%20with%20nature%20Lit%20review.pdf)

### **Material and technical investigation**

Material testing

As colour was a key part of my project, I wanted to test different stained clays, beginning with modelling clay and then moving on to crank to create the colours and textures a found on my walks. To get the right colours I tested different percentages, i.e. 4% 6% 8%, whilst also testing different stains and oxides, i.e. chrome oxide, cobalt oxide, turquoise green stain, bright orange stain. I tried testing these at both earthenware and stoneware as different temperatures create different tones whilst also testing engobes and clear glazes to create the finish too.

Experimenting with decorative slip also allowed me to get smaller details on my pieces. I also tested natural dyes from items like berries and plants which I foraged from Mitcham Common to dye paper with for an idea for future community involved workshops.

#### Model making

Paper model making helped me visualise what the large hexagon vessels would look like and how big I could go with it with it still being able to fit in the kiln. I used smaller scale extruded forms to help develop the form of this vessel before moving on to a larger scale with them. Testing ways that I could suspend ceramic forms with only a couple beads also helped me make the mobile outcome a viable creation.

#### Sledging

I learnt how to sledge using a rotating arm that had my sledging profile attached to it. By setting up a rig that the arm could be attached to so I could sledge a large curved shape. This was a big learning curve as I had never worked large scale with plaster before and had limited experience with sledging.

#### Mould making

During this project I created 3 small geometric moulds, one sprig mould of concrete and one large scale mould of my curved hexagon shape. The big scale mould was very challenging as I had to work quick and couldn't risk making a mistake, I learnt a lot and now feel confident in making large scale moulds. I used the smaller moulds to cast into with terracotta slip whilst I used the larger mould as a press mould which I would have to create twice to then join the pieces together to create the whole hexagon. This process of construction the press moulded vessel was also very challenging, I learnt a lot about what is needed to work large scale with clay - controlling the drying of the clay, securely connecting the two halves to prevent cracks, working to a schedule.

#### Extruding

Extruding was one of the main processes I used, especially for the mobile outcome. Over time I got better at this process, being able to tidy, level and finish the extruded pieces better, this allowed me to eventually produce multiple pieces with speed which then allowed me to be more ambitious with the scale of the mobile. Trying to warp and bend the extruded shapes as they were coming out of the extruder was how I eventually came to the idea of the curved hexagon vessels.

#### Petals/ hand building

To create the petals forms I initially started handbuilding them in the palm of my hand using various green stained clays. I eventually moved on using the slab roller to flatten small balls of clay to allow me to batch produce lots of these petals. Just before workshops closed, I began to use hand building techniques again with porcelain to create more one-off details for the mobile and landscape chain. I think if I had had the time to expand on these hand-made porcelain forms they would've really added a personal touch to the pieces.

#### Plasma cutting

I used the plasma cutter to make the sledging profile for the large vessel in stainless steel. I then also chose this process and material again for the final frame used for the hanging mobile as the material spoke to Croydon/South London's industrial connections whilst the process allowed me to get a strong, precise shape that could hold the weight of the ceramic pieces.



Who?

What references relate to your subject / topic, who else is working in this area what is the precedent of work in the field? (State of the Art)

## 5. Who?

### **Nature charities/ volunteer groups**

Researching into charities and organisations that are working within cities helped me understand the current climate surrounding nature within cities and what is being done to help these spaces:

Trees for Cities, London National City Park, Natural England, London Wildlife Trust, Wandle Trust, Natural History Museum

### **Volunteer groups**

I got involved with The Friends of Mitcham Common and The Croydon Conservation Volunteers helping at a litter pick on Mitcham Common, making a poster for The Friends of Mitcham Common and hazel coppicing in Kings Wood. Helping these groups illuminated the importance of increasing community awareness and engagement with local green spaces, a message which I then tried to incorporate in my ceramic work

### **Artists**

Audrey Krako - [www.audreykrakophotography.com/east](http://www.audreykrakophotography.com/east)

Valeria Nascimento - [www.valerianascimento.com/projects](http://www.valerianascimento.com/projects)

James Rigler - [www.westdean.org.uk/study/school-of-arts/blog/visual-arts-1/visiting-artist-james-rigler](http://www.westdean.org.uk/study/school-of-arts/blog/visual-arts-1/visiting-artist-james-rigler)



When?

When will you do the work, what are the planned stages and milestones?

## 6. When?

**Summer** – Exploring London, particularly its natural spaces to help solidify the main idea of the project, its main themes and aims. Here I noticed that there seems to be good access to green spaces in central London but less of a focus on it on the outskirts of London.

**September** - Experimenting with initial ideas, Nature in London, in the studio. Defining if the project had a practical or conceptual purpose. Creating a model of m

**October** – Narrowing down my research to focus on Croydon, my hometown. Making a cardboard model of my house and street. Initial walk on Mitcham Common looking at what

species can be found on the common and my immediate local area. One walk into Croydon town centre looking for colour inspiration, thinking about how I can combine the research from these two walks (this led to the landscape chain and the terracotta yarrow pots)

**November** – Second walk looking for unique forms in the architecture or Croydon town centre, this is when the hexagon shape became more of a focus. Developing extruded forms, coloured clay/slip tests, engobes, petal forms to combine geometric forms with natural ones. These experiments lead to the creation of the key used to visual convey the urban, the natural and the industrial spaces in Croydon. Testing black clay and concrete sprig mould.

**December** – Wall hung mobile outcome made, using a ceramic ring a string to form a map of Croydon using the key of different landscapes. This led me to want to make a bigger outcome using strung together ceramic pieces showing the different landscapes of Croydon. 3 small plaster moulds made to help me make different geometric shaped forms for larger mobile.

**January** – B&Q research trip. Another walk around Croydon focusing on colours and patterns. Using the extruder to create curved/bended geometric forms. First large-scale mobile outcome produced using moulded and extruded pieces and petal forms. Litter pick with friends of Mitcham Common. Wilderness Island visit and third Croydon walk focusing on colour and pattern.

**February** – Hazel coppicing with The Conservation Volunteers and John Grindrod guided walk. Planning large scale curved hexagon using model making and surface decoration tests. Organising sledging profile and rig. Sledging and mould making.

**March** - Construction and firing of first hexagon vessel. Plasma cutting of ring for mobile and begin batch production of extruded forms for this using decorative details from Croydon. Porcelain experiments for petal forms. (\*From this point on the workshop has closed, the following is what I planned to do\*) learning from the making/firing of the first hexagon vessel produce another four/five. Whilst hexagon vessels take time to dry extruded/ make petals for mobile, have mobile forms ready to fire before Easter break.

**April** - Finish any hexagon vessels, aim to have three or five good ones for degree show. Plasma cut arches for landscape chain. Test construction of mobile during Easter break week. Start constructing landscape chain

**May** – Make another vessel (last resort if firings went wrong). Make any final pieces for landscape chain. Print pictures/ photo book/ research document for degree show (print before degree show set up)



If?

If you undertake this research what are the ethical implications - are you studying or involving people in your research?

7. If?

If I had more time, I wanted to take some of these ideas of going on walks and making ceramic forms from based on what was noticed/or going on walks in natural spaces and creating dyes



etc from findings and make it into a community based workshop within Croydon. This would've required ethical implications, i.e. does it involve children, will I be interviewing/photographing the people involved.



Risk?

What are the health and safety risks and considerations related to your work and how will you mitigate against them?

#### 8. Risk?

Hanging mobile installation- closer to the degree show I would have created a risk assessment for this piece, if it was not constructed/secured properly it could be a risk to the public. The steel ring the piece hung from was designed so it was strong enough to hold the weight of the ceramic pieces. Discussions with tutors would have helped me plan the best way to hang this piece.

Dissertation title/topic:

**The Arts and Crafts movement in reaction to The Industrial revolution: Britain's connection and disconnection with Nature.**