

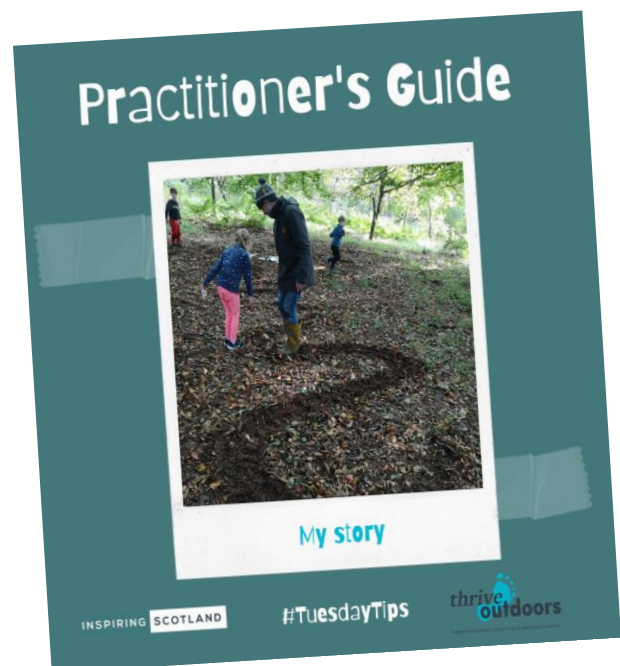
**A Practitioner's Guide  
to  
OUTDOOR PLAY BASED LEARNING**  
**Creativity in the outdoors**  
**Guest blogger: Matt Searles**  
**Head of Learning at Jupiter Artland**

**The creative process and outdoor learning.**

I went the strange way round to arrive here. My journey to outdoor learning went the pretty route via a Degree in Fine Art and 14 years as an Art Lecturer in the Further Education sector. I arrived at Jupiter Artland to initiate my role as the Senior Learning Coordinator seeking to explore the learning process free from the rigid structures of the formal educational machine. I wanted to re-engage with the fluid act of learning and explore the lapping and blending that creativity and outdoor learning brings.

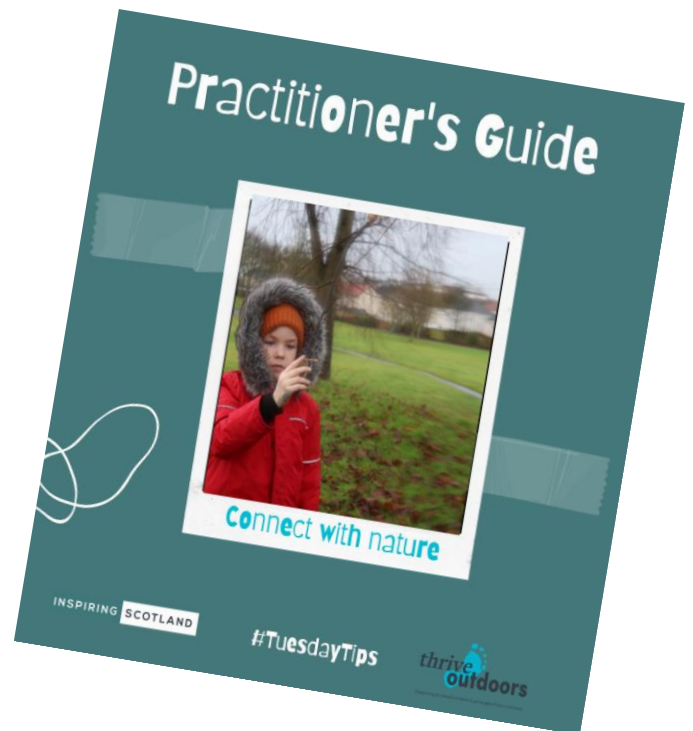
There is a huge potential synergy between the creative process and outdoor learning. They do not seek simplistic, universal answers but rather open up a messy space to play, explore and become aware. However this blending of the creative and the outdoors for me has been an intriguing shift, a jolt, and I find myself now at that exciting point of tip-toeing out beyond my depth with the ever-present temptation to stretch out and grasp the solid, anchored, familiar. I'm in the act of learning again, the secure clarity of being grounded amongst the foggy excitement of letting go.

But this unbounded, shifting position is one creatives love, that sweet spot of being just out of control, hovering between knowing and not knowing, learning and unlearning that prods and probes to invite a happy accident to occur that warps the possibilities towards something new, something innovative, something unexpected.



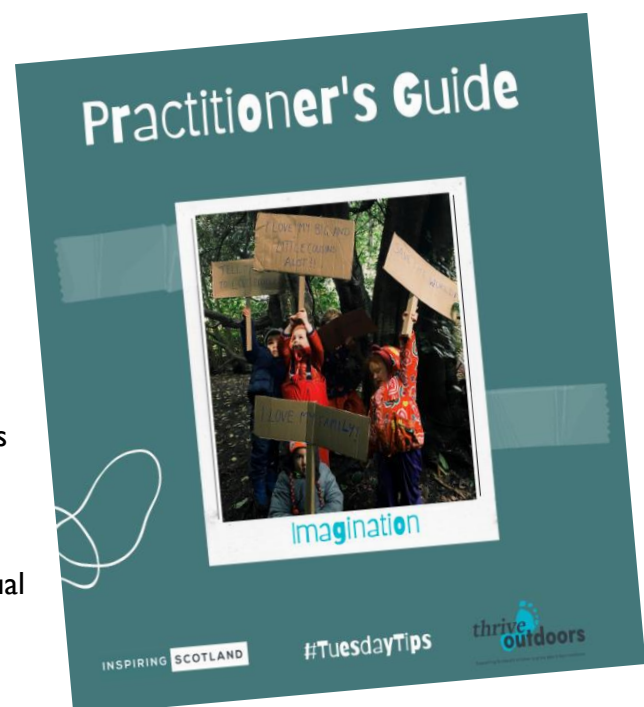
The creative process revels in the unfamiliar. To invite originality boundaries need to be tested and pushed. To be creative, disparate contrasts need to be brought together with the expectation they vibrate and zing to form an unclear something, that challenges stable, static notions and unfolds a fresh space for new critical inquiry. The creative process by its very nature is disruptive; rupturing towards a fluid, shifting and mutating learning landscape.

A creative approach to learning is a free meander, a wandering pedagogy where ends become beginnings. The journey is not linear or logical but complex and chaotic, clear stable conclusions are not apparent nor encouraged. This enables us to focus on the movement, the ride, a process-oriented learning journey centred on how we feel as we learn. Creativity as with learning in the outdoors bring us to the present, the moment of manifestation where we are positioned as the active conduit through which learning passes. On riding this journey you recognise something is happening. You don't know what it is, where it is going but it is massaging that inherent need for curiosity, you are immersed within it, enjoying the learning for the sake of learning, an autotelic idea of learning that takes a deep dive, unperturbed by the enormity of the challenge but driven by the intrinsic thrill of self-actualisation.



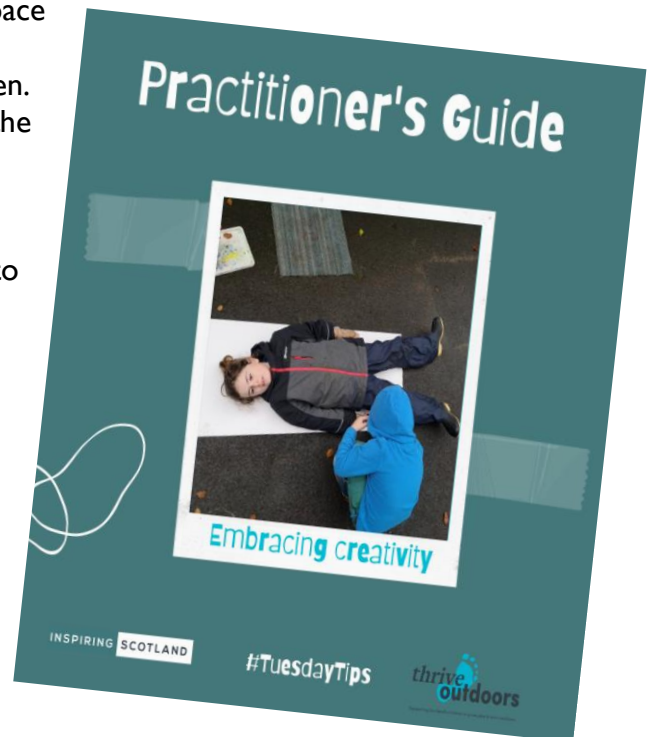
## Being creative outdoors

Being creative, as with the outdoor space, you explore away from the start point, looking outwards beyond the horizon for the infinite connections and relationships. This divergent thinking is spontaneous and overwhelming and shakes up the true complexities and potential within a subject. It poses questions, not answers, and through our inherent need to know initiates the irresistible process of problem solving, undertaken knowing that these potential solutions are often transient and will need constant readdressing through the contextual flux.



Creative and outdoor learning is inherently collaborative. It encourages a dialectical response that forms a platform for inclusion and connection. Learning rests on the things that connect us, the relationships and respect we form with each other, the environment and ultimately ourselves. This unfolds a learning space that enables an investigation of not so much the things themselves but the shifting spaces in-between. The learning oscillates within the complexities of the environment. It is not neat, tidy or ordered but radiant, rich and full of qualitative potency.

The goal for creative and outdoor learning is not to find the simple answers but to suspend judgment and immerse ourselves in the complexities and explore the strategies to navigate through the dense thickets. Learning here is content to sit amongst contradiction and paradox, it is receptive to seeing the subject amongst the tangled context, a learning terrain that is complex and never-ending. A creative outdoor learning journey is not fixated on knowing more but feeling more, a somatic process that asks us to find a way to rest with new things and form new relationships.



## Learning creativity in the outdoors

Learning creatively in the outdoors is alive and active. Learning is sparked through doing. A praxis is formed that drives a theoretical knowing that feeds the practice, a cyclical relationship of deconstruction and creation, an Ouroboros. Learning flows through the successful application of the selected materials and processes. This experiential learning invites the participant to form an awareness of the qualities and limitations inherent within them. You work in partnership with the material and process, finding an awareness and respect that enables a symbiotic relationship to grow in which you work with them to a negotiated goal. Through this learners are able to recognise their independence alongside the interdependency and connectedness they share with the process of creating and the outdoor context. Experiential play opens out a place to assimilate and contextualise this new learning without a fear of consequence. A time to trial and test its resilience and resistance within the changing contextual structures.

We are living through a time that requires massive and instantaneous adjustment and adaption, we are having to form plans on the go, bend and reform ideas to fit an ever changing platform. Nothing is fixed, and we need to not only navigate this but sit relaxed through the journey. In times of rapid change we need learners with the ability to flex to new landscapes. The ability to be creative within a changing context will become paramount to potential success.

The innovation of creativity will power this success and outdoor learning will assimilate and sustain it to the shifting context.

Creative outdoor learning is always at the heart of Jupiter Artland. We offer a full range of learning experiences and programs here at Jupiter, driven by our contemporary art collection and inspired by the landscape.

**[Click here and find out more on what Jupiter Artland can offer you](#)**

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#### Useful Links

**Our handy hints and tips on #outdoorplay**

**<https://www.inspiringscotland.org.uk/thrive/>**

**Jupiter Artland : <https://www.jupiterartland.org/product/woodland-artsparks-3-5/>**