

The Tree of Life: Self-directed mindful drawing and art meditation

A lot of us have been feeling worried or frightened with what has been happening in the world recently, and you might have been feeling some negative emotions too.

There are a lot of things around us that can help us to feel calm. Recently, a lot of research has shown that making or looking at art and being in nature can help us relax and feel better.

The Tree of Life, Phil Price, 2013. Photo by John Gollings



Material needed

- A texta or a pen with no grip (that doesn't require pressure to write).
- A notebook or a piece of paper (minimum should be a postcard size)

The sculpture

During this mindful session, we will get our inspiration from a sculpture called the *Tree of Life*, by the artist Phil Price. This sculpture is remarkably high (10 meters tall!) and each of its 21 "leaves" can move with the wind. This is one of the favourite sculptures of visitors to McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery.



Part 1

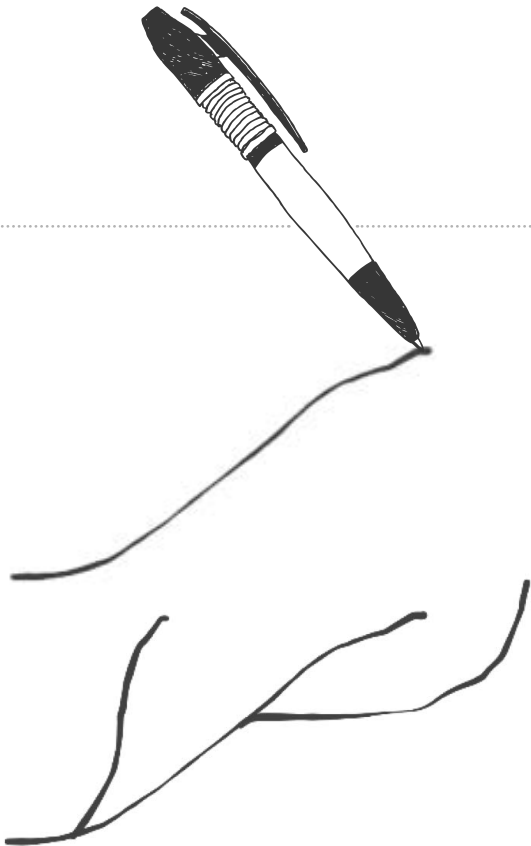
Mindful Drawing

a. Find a quiet spot and sit comfortably.

Place the paper in front of you and pick up your Texta (or pen).

Relax your hand and notice how the pen feels between your fingers. If your grip is too tight, relax your fingers.

The purpose of this exercise is to develop your mindfulness. The final drawing does not matter. It does not have to be beautiful or finished. You do not have to share the result with anyone.



b. We are going to draw three lines; they will represent the branches of our tree.

Gently holding your pen between your fingers, as you breathe in, let the pen glide on the paper to draw a line. Raise your pen as you breathe out. **Notice how the pen interacts with the paper.** Does it make a sound? How is the texture of the line? Straight? Wavy?

Bring attention to your breath. Do not try to control it, keep breathing naturally. As you breathe in, place your pen at any point of the first line and draw a second line. Raise your pen as you breathe out. Repeat this a third time: draw a line as you breathe in and raise your pen as you breathe out.



c. We will now draw some leaves on the lines.

Choose a simple shape (a simple leaf, an oval or circle for example). **For the next 20 seconds, we will draw one leaf any time you breathe.**

Starting anywhere on a line, draw half of the leaf as you breathe in and half of the leaf as you breathe out. On the next breath, start a new leaf.

Tips

Aim at starting and finishing the leaf on the same dot.

It does not matter if the leaves are not similar but always close the leaf.

The pen should follow your breath.

Do not try to modify your breath to fit your movement but have your pen follow your breath. Bring your awareness to your breath, to the feeling of your hand holding the pen, to the sound of the pen on your paper.

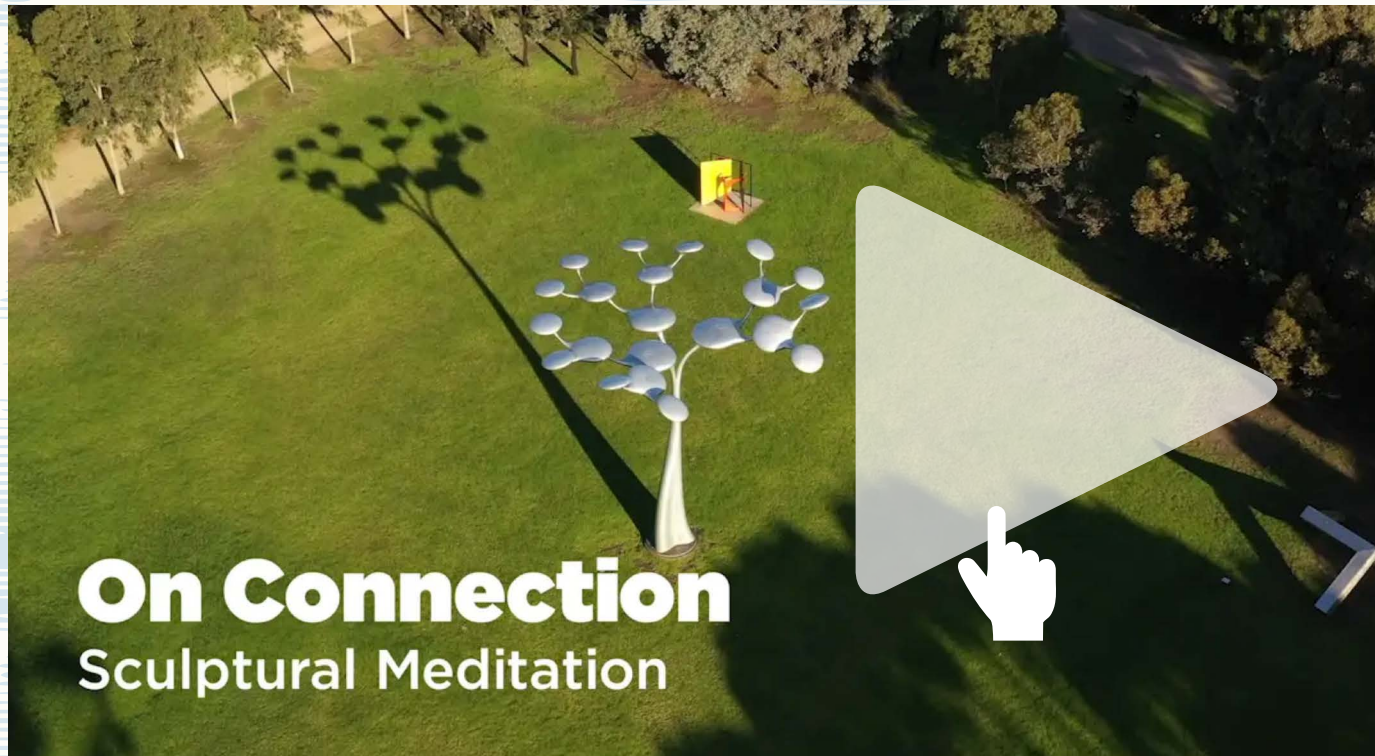


Part 2

Video of Sculptural Meditation

To conclude our mindful session, we will watch the sculptural meditation inspired by *The Tree of Life* by Phil Price. The video is 4 minutes long.

Watch the video by clicking [here](#) or press the “play” button on the image below (or search for “On Connection McClelland Vimeo” on the Internet)



A bit more about McClelland

McClelland Sculpture Park and Gallery is a big park, where you can discover *The Tree of Life* and more than 100 other sculptures as well as an art gallery in a natural environment. It is located in Langwarrin, close to Frankston, and on the land of the Bunurong people and Boon Wurrung people.

You can discover more about it [here](#).

