

# EXPLORE THE DANCE OF PEOPLE AND THE NATURAL WORLD

Please leave in the gallery for others to enjoy.

## AN INVITATION TO EXPLORE BY CREATIVESHIFT

When we enter *The Dance of People and the Natural World* it feels like a space of comfort and calm and a place to rest. Through her landscapes Omuku invites us to reflect upon our own experiences in nature, such as the pleasure of a small garden and the joy of nurturing plants and contemplating life.

In the sessions we offer at creativeShift we also aim to create safe and welcoming spaces, offering a place to rest, play and to explore art through making, allowing time to see what happens. Like Omuku, we invite people to make their own unique observations and reflections on the environment around them.

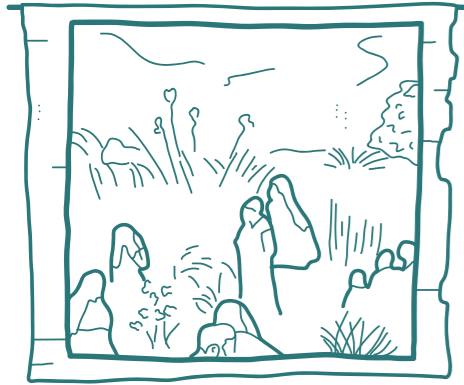
Omuku encourages us to peep through the paint and engage with the stories that lie on either side of her woven cloths. Her muted pastel colours entice us into a dreamlike world – one of real and imagined landscapes – offering a place to explore and perhaps to even dance within.

Imagine what it would be like to walk barefoot in *Eden*, to brush against its long grass, or to sit under its blue and purple skies where both body and time seem to dissolve. What would it feel like to dip below the cool surface of *Wade in the Water* or snuggle into *Welcome Home's* lush foliage, feeling a deep sense of connection to the ground? Is this the sense of belonging we have when we know we are home?

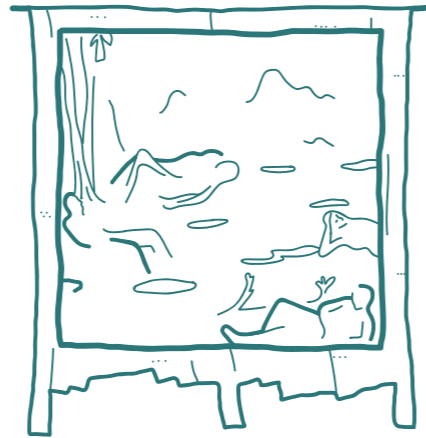
Like the people that inhabit Omuku's paintings, we invite you to think about ways you might rest in the landscape and find harmony with nature. We gently encourage you to slow down, breathe, find the joy and to feel at home.

creativeShift CIC is a dedicated team of arts on referral practitioners, committed to supporting people experiencing social isolation and mental or physical health challenges through artmaking and creativity. Barbara and Beki (the authors of this invite) have been offering creative wellbeing sessions at Arnolfini since 2018.

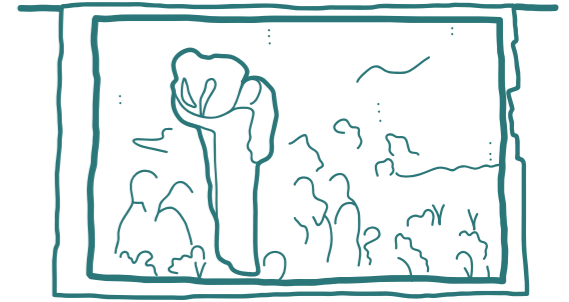
creativeShift encourages you to think about how landscapes, nature and your environment affects the way you feel, suggesting different ways in which to explore the exhibition.



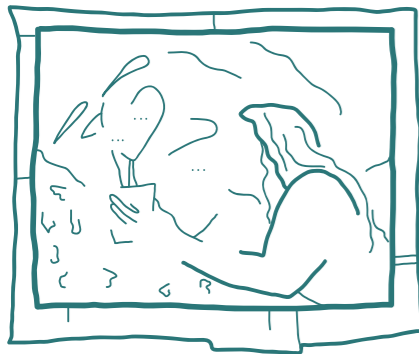
**Days Gone By** captures a memory of happier times. What inspires you to think about happy moments or memories in your life?



Water is often associated with peacefulness and tranquillity like in **Wade in the Water**. What natural environments help you feel at peace? Where and how do you find moments of rest each day?



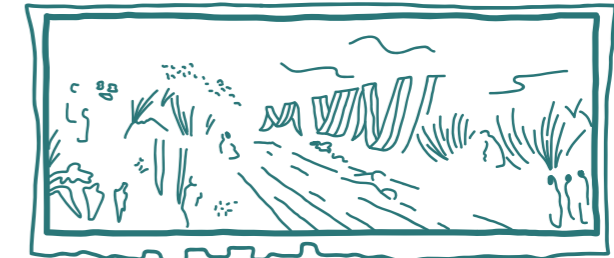
The colours in **Quorum** suggest a darkened night sky. How do different colours in Omuku's work make you feel?



If you could talk to plants and flowers like in **Still Life**, what would you say? Do you have a favourite plant or flower that you can draw or describe?



In **Untitled** a woman looks off into the distance. Try standing or sitting still, closing your eyes, and thinking about a place in which you feel comfortable or safe.



Omuku paints both real and imagined landscapes like in **Eden**. Can you describe your favourite garden or landscape? What five words and feelings spring to mind?



Omuku's work says **Welcome Home**. What landscapes and environments make you feel at home?

These prompts have been created by creativeShift and Arnolfini to help you interpret the exhibition in your own way.

# 'I REALISED THAT PEOPLE SEEMED TO BE TRYING TO RECONNECT WITH NATURE.'

**My Mother's Garden** - Omuku is often inspired by the gardens created by her horticulturalist mother in Warri and Port Harcourt, Nigeria, where she spent her childhood. Her mother's drawings of plants in coloured pencil also provided Omuku with her first experience of art: 'this image of my family and the captivating greenery has always provided me with a sense of safety and comfort.'

**Giverny** - Whilst studying painting at The Slade School of Fine Art in London, Omuku was introduced to the Western tradition of landscape painting, including the work of the Impressionist group of painters. She has described seeing Claude Monet's *Waterlilies* at the Musée de L'Orangerie in Paris as a 'deeply spiritual experience', and later made a special journey to his garden in Giverny.

**Ibadan** - In 2022 Omuku participated in the Kòbòmòjé

Artist Residency in Ibadan, Nigeria, nestled in the hilly Iyaganku landscape. During the residency she often visited the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture to take long walks. Both experiences provided her with an opportunity to reconnect with nature and to 'look at a horizon uninterrupted'. Gradually, the plants and flowers she saw on her walks appeared in her paintings, accompanying the figures which were already central to her work.

**Eden** - Omuku's paintings often combine both real and imagined elements to create lush landscapes like *Eden*. Through these works she is able to reclaim the landscape, which has previously been tied to colonial ideas of ownership: 'See the land we have mastered; it's beautiful.' In contrast, Omuku's landscapes offer places of both individual and collective healing.

[www.nengiomuku.com](http://www.nengiomuku.com)



Explore **The Dance of People and the Natural World** can be downloaded on our website or listened to as an audio guide using the QR code.

Please return this guide after you have explored the exhibition.

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