

2a7

Sit

Do

Choose a spot to sit with a notebook and just look and listen. Write down what you see.

Story

Film students went out to sit for an hour and note down something strange, ugly, amazing, beautiful, and despicable. On their return, they shared the realities of danger, poverty, and addiction in their rundown neighbourhood, but also the amazing centuries-old tree in the cemetery and the family eating ice cream in winter.

They noticed the generosity of the cornerstone shopkeeper who never let a familiar face pass without a warm greeting, and the child singing at the station as both a beautiful sound and evidence of the sad reality of child labour.

In place of the usual grumbles, conversation slowly turned to positive aspects of the neighborhood such as the peaceful gardens, children's games, families, and friendships. We kept asking, "How does this place make you feel?"

(abridged from Natalie Nesvaderani in Lenette 2022)

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Hints & Hazards

Don't try and find community resources that will be useful or even fine, pithy insights into the nature of the place you are sitting. Just sit. Switch off your phone and allow the insignificance, the inactivity, the elusive true nature of this place to slowly seep into you. Don't be afraid of returning empty handed.

Listen with all your senses, hold your gaze to the heart of this place, soak up the atmosphere, and simply be. It's like meditating on a place, like prayer, like making friends with the stones and bricks and passing people.

After a time, something may catch your attention, and it is time to write, or draw or fill in the missing details with your imagination.

It's OK to throw some bait into the water and see if anyone swims into a conversation with you. But all the time, you are drinking in the experience of simply being here, of watching the procession go by, of listening to the story told by your neighbour on the bench, who might even turn out to be Forrest Gump himself.