

Module: Ways Of Perceiving. ADDA4023/C

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The EcoArt Exhibition

This curated exhibition is showcasing unique and innovative artworks including pieces made from human waste materials. Each piece of artwork evokes a call to environmental action and raises awareness of many environmental man-made problems. It highlights the growing global effects of human impacts on the environment such as climate change, microplastics, and human waste. This exhibition aims to be inspirational as well as educational. As stated from Picasso *“Art is a lie that makes us realise the truth”* (Picasso, 1923, p.315). This emphasizes that forms of artwork have a visual voice within their work to help raise awareness of current problems.



Fig 1. (Gruyaert, 1988, *Last Call*)

This exhibition is showcasing in a vibrant and lively airport. Due to the constant busy atmosphere of people travelling to go on holiday and work. The airport offers people waiting time to think and reflect on more thoughtful actions that they can make to create

a better environment. As Tolstoy states that *"Art is the activity by which a person, having experienced an emotion, intentionally transmits it to others."* (Tolstoy, 1995)

Visualizing emotions directly from one person to another helps communicate the need to take action.

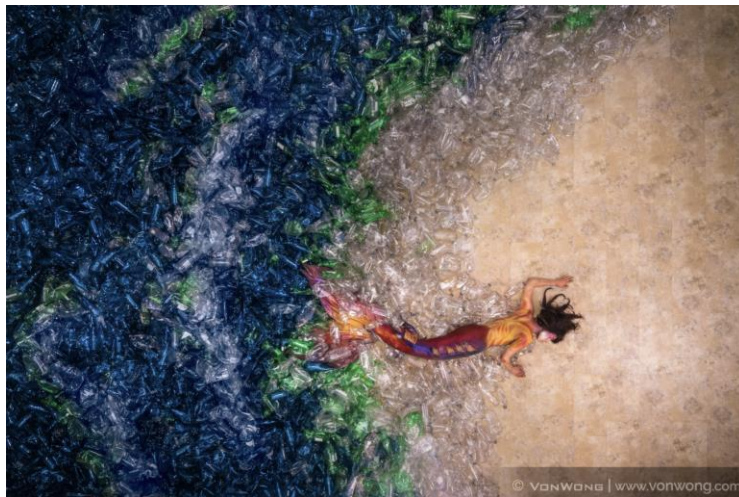


Fig 2. (Von Wong, 2016, Mermaids Hate Plastic)

This artist's project work sets the stage for the core exhibition's narratives through the devastation of plastic pollution. The stage setup was created from 10,000 bottles which were collected with the help of waste management company Tomra. It represents the number of bottles used in one American lifetime to create an ocean scene. The infographical photograph of 10,000 bottles creates a powerful visual image instead of using data.

The piece helps spread the environmental message to viewers to help be more thoughtful of their plastic waste. The symbolic mythical mermaid represents a surreal magical image in contrast to a darker message of the mass-produced, ugly plastic bottles. This helps the viewer appreciate the urgency of this topical issue. By using “*a more palatable fiction to tell the truth*” (Von Wong, 2016) helps people relate to it in a more engaging way effectively, instead of being seen as a boring topic.

The use of colour differentiation is particularly effective, with the green and blue ocean showing healthy life compared to the dull greyness of an unhealthy earth. Furthermore, the contrast and juxtaposition between the vibrant, bright orange tonal colours of the mermaid compared to the dull, neutral polluted colours of the ocean draws the viewers' attention straight to the topic. It is an ironic piece, in that waste can be used to create beauty and look realistic.

Not only does this photograph include visual imagery, but it states underneath a shocking statement. “*By 2050, there will be more plastics than fish in the sea*” (Von Wong, 2016). This powerful activists work sparks an urgent warning, grabbing the viewers' attention into behavioural change.



Fig 3. (Opazo, M, 2021, Re-Dress)

The second artist focuses on another environmental issue through fast fashion. Not only does she address the issue, but she delves into a solution to this problem. She uses mycelium mushrooms, which break down the material and decompose the piece.

"Scientific experiment to find resolution" (Opazo, 2021). This creates a living form of artwork which demonstrates a way forward to restore what was once human waste from the fast fashion industry. This also symbolises that living organisms can be restored from human waste consumption. The use of an abstract cube structure reinforces the idea of human waste being structured, creating an almost brick-like object.

The irony within this piece shows how using polluted materials can create a new form of life. The clothing items act as nutrients for the mushrooms and represent how nature will take over and outlast human waste.

Her futuristic artwork instantly makes the viewer question their throw away culture, which helps them reflect on their actions throughout this exhibition. Cooley challenges this idea of human industry waste *"Human society sustains itself by transforming nature into garbage."* (Cooley, 1995, p.2) which is where Opazos work reverses this.



Fig 4. (Hakkeijima, Y, 2022, Microplastic Globe project)

This project was created to help raise awareness about ocean plastic pollution, especially about microplastics (which we can't see). The individual microplastics in this piece were sourced from deep in the ocean. The form of this artwork represents our

planet through the use of the globe, which helps symbolise this is a worldwide issue.

This also creates a snow-globe like appearance, captivating the viewers' emotions. The whiteness of the dead white coral, which is normally a vibrant colour, is a stark reminder of the effects of sea pollution.

For the exhibition, this artwork would create a user-friendly interactive experience. Due to it being a transparent globe made from recycled plastic, the viewers can walk around the whole sphere and look closely at what is happening inside.

This artwork demonstrates the massive growing problem of microplastics which will eventually ends up in our consumer food chain. As stated from the WWF-UK *"It doesn't biodegrade! Instead, it breaks down into smaller and smaller pieces, called microplastics... 90% of seabirds have plastic in their stomachs."* (WWF-UK, 2015). This demonstrates the severe threat to marine life.



Fig 5. (Mattison, C, 2018, Our Changing Seas VI / Afterglow)

Mattison's work is also perfect for this exhibition as it clearly demonstrates the impact climate change has on the coral reefs ecosystems. The use of mixed-media material of hand-crafted clay using porcelain to create in depth texture creating a realistic and aesthetically pleasing outcome. The central reef being bright, bold healthy colours whilst spiraling out to bleached, white dead corals that are skeleton-like, clearly demonstrate that our oceans are environmentally damaged and in need of our urgent attention.

The form of this artwork is spiraling out of control, almost like a tornado and as the artist describes it as *"swirling like the rotating winds of a cyclone"* (Mattison, 2014). This helps demonstrate the chaotic damage and quick devastation on the mass majority of the coral reefs due to human induced climate change and warming water temperatures.

This could also be interpreted and perceived in different ways by the white coral reefs being destroyed from the storm. It creates an artistic metaphor, by symbolizing deadly human activity around the coral reef, yet within the centre of the reef there is some healthy coral life remaining.

Mattison has created a 3D visual sculptural artwork. He also encourages users to not touch the artwork and to only look, almost symbolic of how we should be treating the ocean. Also, as the artwork is breakable, it emphasizes how fragile the coral reefs are

and why humans should respect and protect them more. The artist states *“If my work can influence viewers to appreciate the fragile beauty of our endangered coral reef ecosystems, we will act more wholeheartedly to help them recover and even thrive.”* (Mattison, 2014).

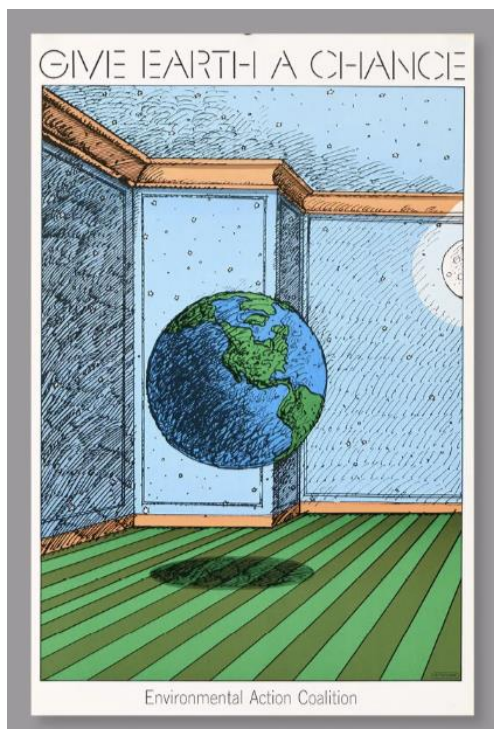


Fig 6. (Glaser, M, 1970, Give Earth a Chance.)

To conclude the exhibition, the work of postmodern graphic designer Glaser adds an inspirational positive note. This poster was created for World Earth Day on April 22, 1970. Glaser discussed with other artistic contemporaries about the environmental and ecological problems facing the world, particularly after several environmental disasters in the late 1960's. As a result, he took part in World Earth Day by producing *“Give Earth*

A Chance.” This was a poster made by using a technique with inks called offset lithography.

Glaser was inspired by NASA’s space adventure to the moon in the late 1960’s. The photographic images from space showed earth as both beautiful but fragile. The artwork hangs below a vast blue ceiling and above a green grass-like floor, showing the precarious environmental balance of the universe that mankind lives within. The piece is a call-to-action, telling people that we should care more about our environment. As stated from Swan, “*the greatest threat to our planet is the belief that someone else will save it*” (Swan, 2012, p.12). We should all be responsible for our actions.

The form within this poster breaks away from the modernism art movement of form and rigid structures, creating a more conceptual image of the earth tones such as blues and greens in the room. This poster also represents communication through the earth being trapped inside a man-made room, evoking a cry for help and creating a surrealist but eye-catching poster to the viewer. This piece helps engage the viewer to understand the clear message between both the environment and nature through the globe and the human impact represented by the room.

Hopefully this exhibition will bring people together on a diverse topical current problem.

The aim of this exhibition is for the viewer to become engaged with these problems and be re-educated, re-informed, and inspired for a more positive future.

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