

Ways of Perceiving

Curation essay

Reef Thieves and Ocean killers

Student name: Jasmine Palmer

P number: 2004650

Programme of study: BA Fine Art

Module: ADAD4019

Lecturers name: Ryan Moule

Word count: 1441

Reef Thieves and Ocean killers

The exhibition I am curating shows environmental based artworks based on current environmental issues regarding the sea and the life within. This is a reflection of how we as humans treat the sea and the consequences of our actions that are occurring currently and foreshadows what it may be like in the future for marine life.

As an artist that is very passionate about the environment, these pieces stimulate my passion for ocean preservation and the protection of sea life and I hope it can do the same for those seeing the exhibition.

“The sea, the great unifier, is man's only hope. Now, as never before, the old phrase has a literal meaning: we are all in the same boat.” - Jacques Yves Cousteau

This exhibition will be a journey exploring different environmental issues concerning the sea and how we're responsible.

There will be a total of four artworks because of how impactful they are, I feel a minimalist approach would be better for the artworks to get a full understanding of the pieces.

The Mission Gallery Swansea

Figure 2

Figure 1

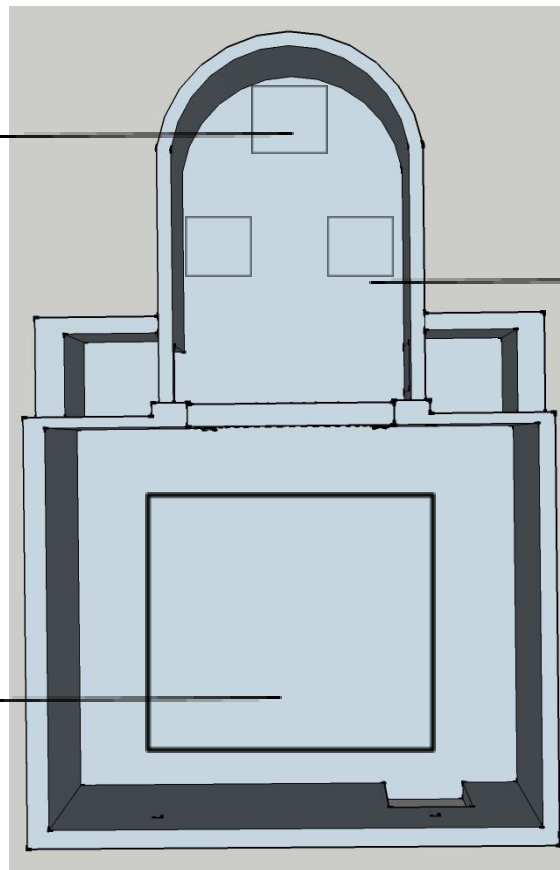


Figure 3 + 4



Figure 1: Courtney Mattison - *Our Changing Seas III*(2014)

305 x 427 x 55cm (120 x 168 x 22 in)

The exhibition will commence with a porcelain based sculpture on coral bleaching. This piece shows both the beauty and vibrance of coral and the deafening white coral damaged by our disregard of climate change.

"Corals are so sensitive that the slightest change to the temperature or chemistry of the seawater that surrounds them can cause total devastation through coral bleaching, death and reef erosion." - Artist Courtney Mattison 2014.

Coral bleaching is where coral turns white because of the lack of microscopic algae called zooxanthellae, that's what makes coral so vibrant and colourful. The algae and coral live together to help each other to survive. When the sea temperatures get too hot for the coral, it

gets stressed and rids itself of the algae, when the algae leaves the coral turns white. If the environment stays too hot, the coral won't let the algae back and will die. "Scientists predict that all corals will be threatened by 2050, with 75 percent facing high to critical threat levels."

(Coral Reef Alliance 2019)

"93% of heat accumulated in the Earth's atmosphere is absorbed by the oceans" - (MSC)

The sea temperature is rising every year due to climate change and is a danger to marine life. When coral bleaching occurs, fish no longer feed off that coral, disturbing the natural balance. "In the past 30 years, marine heatwaves are estimated to have increased by more than 50%. Globally, ocean temperatures are predicted to increase by 1-4°C by 2100."

(MSC Marine Steward Council 2020)

I will curate this artwork on the floor, in the centre of the room on a short, white platform, to immerse the audience with the piece. This will get people to move around it, allowing them to admire the colour, shapes and patterns while looking down from different angles, as you would while snorkelling. To accompany this, the gallery will be heated just over its normal temperature, promoting discussion about the heat and making links to this piece and its issue. This is to enhance the response from the public as the artists' intentions are wanting people to be curious and find out more about this issue through admiration or curiosity of the sculpture. The hope in showing this piece is that people will want to take action against this crisis.

There are precautions put in place to physically protect the coral world wide, for example Egypt has specific places snorkelers and divers can enter the water because of green fins. Green fins is an initiative of the United Nations Environment Programme and Reef-World, "internationally recognised code of conduct used to reduce the environmental impact of the diving and snorkelling industry." - *(Reef world foundation)*



Figure 2: Dan Lewis - 'planet' (2019) microplastic arrangement 70x70cm

I chose this piece because it matches the colour and symbolism of the previous piece while also moving into a different area of environmental issues, litter and plastic being dumped into the ocean. This artist retraced our relationship with plastics, inspired by his father, a plastics technologist.

This piece will be on the back wall of the mission gallery so as people walk through into the next room from figure 1, they will see this piece, a gradual link from the previous piece.

Applying Barthes theory of semiotics to this curation, concerning the colour scheme allows the audience to associate this piece with the last, whilst also associating it with joy because of the vibrance and array of colours in the piece. Once realising the piece is made of litter

and waste with reference to the great pacific garbage patch, a feeling of catharsis should accompany the realisation.

“The semiotics of colour is about the meaning we convey through colour as a sign.” -

“Colour semiotics determines the meaning imparted by the sensation that an observer experiences when they look at the colour of such signs.” - (*Mario Van Der Meulen 2019*)

The great pacific garbage patch, also known as the pacific trash vortex in the north pacific ocean (spans waters from the West Coast of North America to Japan), is where litter and waste has gathered in two different locations and is staying there because of the North Pacific Subtropical Gyre.

“Oceanographers and ecologists recently discovered that about 70% of marine debris actually sinks to the bottom of the ocean.” - (*Caryl-Sue, National Geographic Society 2019*)

The negative effects of this include contaminating the water, increasing the risk of marine life getting diseases, marine life eating and choking on this litter, and a disturbance of the natural balance. The purpose of this piece is to remind people not to litter, to care for the environment and prevent more ecological disasters like the garbage patch.



Figure 3 and 4: *Jasmine Färling - Swansea College of Art, University of Wales Trinity Saint David - Vanitas of the Anthropocene (2018)*

My final two artworks are a couple of Jasmine Färling's pieces from her series 'Vanitas of the Anthropocene'. Vanitas is an art genre where a still life artwork demonstrates the futility of life, the certainty of death. This piece manifests Vanitas as it displays humans disregard for the ocean, a source of life for those within and a life source for us, as it is estimated that it produces 50 - 80% of our oxygen. (*Seaspiracy documentary 2021*)

"For man does not know his time. Like fish that are taken in an evil net, like birds that are caught in a snare, so children of men are snared at an evil time, when it suddenly falls upon them". - Ecclesiastes 9v12, ESV.

I chose this because I wanted to make it personal to those seeing the exhibition as the artwork is of the litter gathered from the shores of Swansea bay. As the first two artworks are about large issues in the world far from Swansea, these artworks bring the journey of the exhibition back to Swansea. This piece was made in 2018, it is now 2021 and it has only gotten worse. A recent headline - '12 tonnes of litter collected over the Bank Holiday' 8th of April 2021 ([Swansea.gov](https://www.swansea.gov.uk/news/12-tonnes-of-litter-collected-over-the-bank-holiday)). "Drugs, smashed glass bottles, cans, disposable BBQ's and wooden pallets were strewn across the sand, while multiple bags of litter were piled up alongside public bins that had been filled to the top." 24th April 2021 ([WalesOnline](https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/12-tonnes-litter-collected-over-bank-holiday-2021-04-08)).

In a recent documentary released on netflix 'Seaspiracy', it discusses issues from whaling to litter to fishing. One of the points that stood out for me was that it's estimated that over 50% of the pacific garbage patch is fishing waste, nets and ropes etc.

"46% of the great pacific garbage patch is fishing nets alone." - (Ali Tabrizi 2021 Seaspiracy - source - Scientific Reports 2018)

This is why I chose the first image, because it makes that statistic come to life, the nets and fishing gear found on swansea bay could have been part of that 50%, and this is what I want the people of swansea to think about.

In the exhibition I would place two photographs off this piece on the two side walls of the gallery and they will be A1 images. I've chosen to have them as photos because it brings a darker tone to the piece with the ominous black background with the spotlight shining on the piece, making it more impactful. To accompany the photos will be an accumulation litter gathered from Swansea bay in the centre of the room to emphasise the distress we are causing the ocean with our litter.

Bibliography

Mattison, C. (2018). *Courtney Mattison*. [online] Courtney Mattison. Available at: <https://courtneymattison.com/>.

World Photography Organisation. (n.d.). *Jasmine Färling "Vanitas of the Anthropocene."* [online] Available at: <https://www.worldphoto.org/ko/node/4423> [Accessed 1 May 2021].

Earth Day. (2020). *Artist Courtney Mattison details beauty, and bleaching, of coral reefs.* [online] Available at: <https://www.earthday.org/artist-courtney-mattison-details-beauty-and-bleaching-of-coral-reefs/#:~:text=Through%20her%20large%2Dscale%20ceramic> [Accessed 1 May 2021].

Wikipedia Contributors (2019). *Vanitas*. [online] Wikipedia. Available at: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanitas>.

www.missiongallery.co.uk. (n.d.). *Mission Gallery*. [online] Available at: <https://www.missiongallery.co.uk/> [Accessed 1 May 2021].

FreedomUnited.org. (2021). *So you've watched Seaspiracy — now what?* [online] Available at: https://www.freedomunited.org/speak-free/seaspiracy/?gclid=Cj0KCQjw-LOEBhDCARIsABrC0TnnpJhKgRrmN0QNqEsrzYw5-7vYj-FH93VS_z3m-NbPQGn21foQubgaAsuoEALw_wcB [Accessed 1 May 2021].

SEASPIRACY. (n.d.). *SEASPIRACY DOCUMENTARY*. [online] Available at: <https://www.seaspiracy.org/>.

Ecclesiastes 9:12 Holy Bible: *English Standard Version*

NOAA (2020). *How much oxygen comes from the ocean?* [online] oceanservice.noaa.gov. Available at: <https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/ocean-oxygen.html#:~:text=Scientists%20estimate%20that%2050%2D80>.

www.swansea.gov.uk. (n.d.). *Swansea - 12 tonnes of litter collected over the Bank Holiday*. [online] Available at: <https://www.swansea.gov.uk/article/62282/12-tonnes-of-litter-collected-over-the-Bank-Holiday> [Accessed 1 May 2021].

Bannon, C. (2021). *Drugs, smashed glass and burning BBQs left on beach*. [online] WalesOnline. Available at: <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/news/wales-news/drugs-smashed-glass-burning-bbqs-20457484> [Accessed 1 May 2021].

Letcher, L. (2020). *Stark Cornish light is being shone on the state of our oceans*. [online] CornwallLive. Available at: <https://www.cornwalllive.com/news/cornwall-news/cornwall-plastics-exhibition-shines-light-3734257> [Accessed 1 May 2021].

Hancock, L. (2014). *Everything You Need to Know about Coral Bleaching—and How We Can Stop It*. [online] World Wildlife Fund. Available at: <https://www.worldwildlife.org/pages/everything-you-need-to-know-about-coral-bleaching-and-how-we-can-stop-it>.

Coral.org. (2019). *Threats to Coral Reefs | Coral Reef Alliance*. [online] Available at: <https://coral.org/coral-reefs-101/reef-threats/>.

US EPA,OA (2016). *Climate Change Indicators: Ocean Heat | US EPA*. [online] US EPA. Available at: <https://www.epa.gov/climate-indicators/climate-change-indicators-ocean-heat>.

National Geographic Society (2019). *Great Pacific Garbage Patch*. [online] National Geographic Society. Available at: <https://www.nationalgeographic.org/encyclopedia/great-pacific-garbage-patch/>.

The Editors of Encyclopedia Britannica (2018). *semiotics | Definition, Theory, Examples, & Facts*. In: *Encyclopædia Britannica*. [online] Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/science/semiotics>.

www.msc.org. (n.d.). *Climate change and fishing | Marine Stewardship Council*. [online] Available at:

https://www.msc.org/what-we-are-doing/oceans-at-risk/climate-change-and-fishing?gclid=Cj0KCQjw4cOEBhDMARIsAA3XDRhudKbBdGbs1BiuZzVGbfFvwZ09TMV2Cf8HPmPcVIRJUaAXg5gpaPEaAoNwEALw_wcB [Accessed 4 May 2021].

Foolproof. (2019). *The semiotics of colour*. [online] Available at: <https://www.foolproof.co.uk/journal/the-semiotics-of-colour/>.

Lebreton, L., Slat, B., Ferrari, F., Sainte-Rose, B., Aitken, J., Marthouse, R., Hajbane, S., Cunsolo, S., Schwarz, A., Levivier, A., Noble, K., Debeljak, P., Maral, H., Schoeneich-Argent, R., Brambini, R. and Reisser, J. (2018). Evidence that the Great Pacific Garbage Patch is rapidly accumulating plastic. *Scientific Reports*, [online] 8(1). Available at: <https://www.nature.com/articles/s41598-018-22939-w>.

UNEP. (2019). *Protecting Egypt's colourful coral reefs with Green Fins*. [online] Available at: <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/story/protecting-egypts-colourful-coral-reefs-green-fins> [Accessed 4 May 2021].

The Reef-World Foundation. (n.d.). *Green Fins*. [online] Available at: <https://reef-world.org/green-fins> [Accessed 4 May 2021].