

Research Report

Swansea Botanical Gardens Group

In Swansea Botanical Gardens, there are three greenhouses: the Mediterranean room, the Cacti room, and the Tropical room. As a group, we planned to exhibit throughout all three rooms. We set up a group chat and communicated well and clearly with each other. We visited the site as a group to discuss ideas of what we could do and where artwork could go. The theme for our exhibition was climate change and global warming, and we wanted to work with current issues in articles and the media. As a group, we came up with many different ideas, but it took us a while to decide what we wanted exactly. The on-site tutorials with the lecturers were beneficial and inspired us to be even more creative.

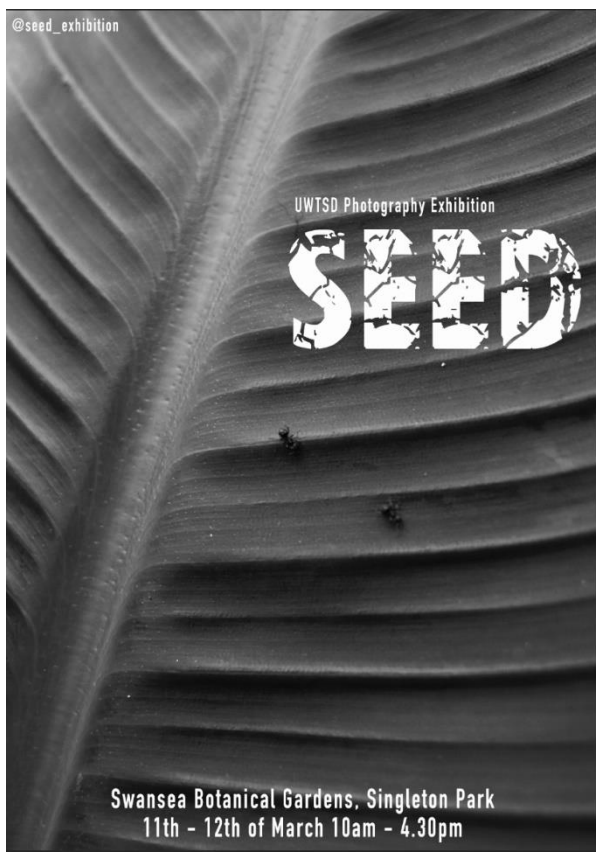
Even though we worked as a group and helped each other out, we still created and developed our individual artworks. My initial idea was to make lots of small cyanotypes displaying articles about climate change, such as the recent issues with fires and flooding. I thought I could tie them to the railings by the pond in the Mediterranean room. I also thought I could make them into zines and sell them at the end to help raise money for the new gate for the gardens. Another idea I thought of was to create the cyanotypes on-site and using the leaves in the greenhouse. However, due to health and safety, there was a hazard having my cyanotype prints tied to the railing by the water, in case it rained and the chemicals leaked into the water or soil, harming the fish and plants, so I decided to make a couple of books instead. For my artwork in the exhibition, I created two cyanotype books with different images in each, and the centre pages were painted to link to pollution, which affects global warming. The images I used in the books were photos I took of some of the plants in the greenhouses. I thought this would be interesting because the plants have to be kept in a certain kind of climate because they are from around the world and have been taken out of their natural habitats. With more and more plants becoming endangered, this is the only way for them to survive now.

Moreover, I wanted to create cyanotypes because I love how over time if left in sunlight, the prints will fade. This links with climate change because our world is fading and starting to melt, and we need to make changes to prevent this.

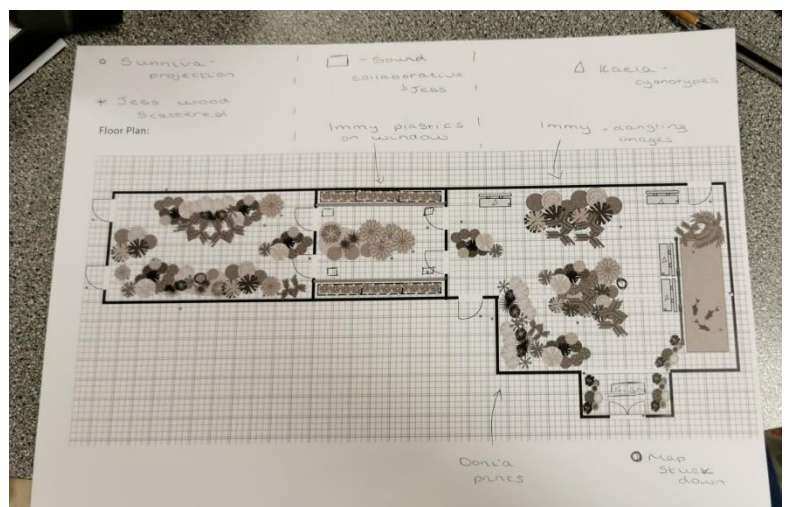
I was influenced by Anna Atkins' cyanotypes, where she displayed the different types of plants and algae. Cyanotypes are well suited to display images of plants, and the blue colouring gives them a sense of loss and the need for preservation. The artist Rachel Thomson works with cyanotypes to display the plastic waste she finds and highlights the importance this material has on climate change. I was inspired by an article I read on the National Geographic website, which is titled 'Thirsty future ahead as climate change explodes plant growth'. The article states that by the end of the century, plants could consume substantially more water, leaving less for people across North America, Europe, and Central Asia. I was surprised by this information but with the increased flooding

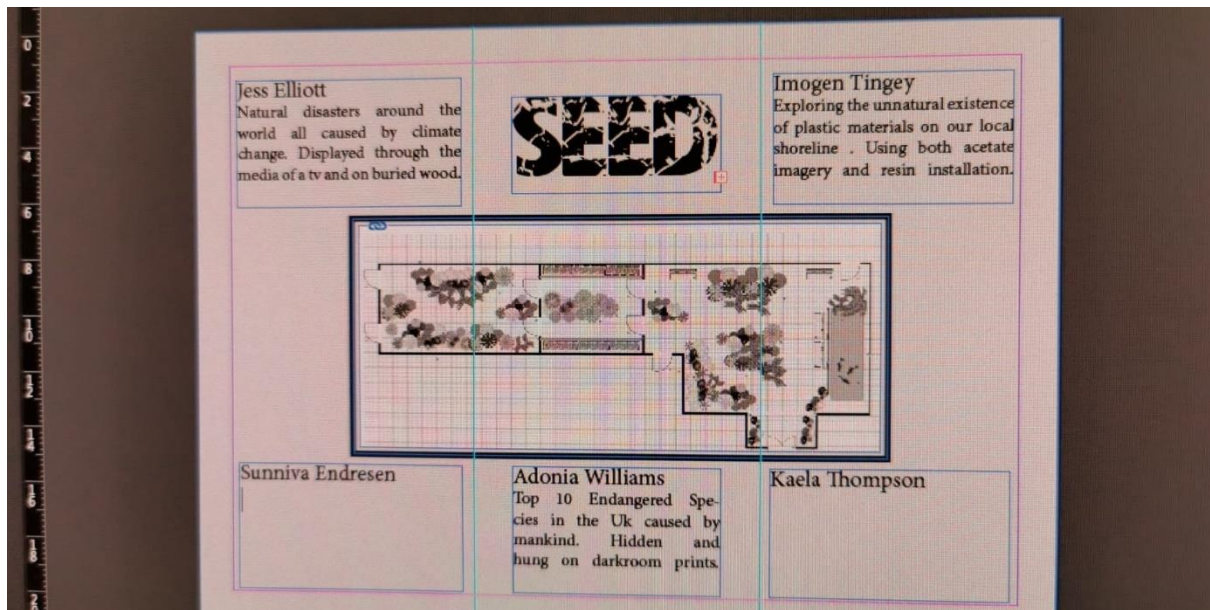
happening around the world, it does seem highly likely that something like this would happen, all down to climate change.

We decided to make some zines with some darkroom prints in them, which visitors could take with them and leave a donation for it, which would go towards the new gate for the gardens. On an on-site tutorial, one of the lecturers suggested giving out seeds to the visitors and not telling them what kind of seed it was. So as a group, we loved this idea and decided to put some random seeds into little envelopes, which I wrote the words 'plant me' on and put them in with the zines, and I helped to tie up with string. We made maps of the greenhouses so the public could find the areas our work was in, and there were short statements from each student to give a brief idea of what their work is about. Also, when setting up, I helped with the ladder because we didn't want any accidents happening, so we made sure two people were holding the bottom of it when someone was on it hanging up work. The ladder was also needed to place the speaker equipment on the ledge in the cacti room, which I managed to do. Furthermore, the people who worked in the gardens were amiable and helpful, and Jeff helped us to hide the electricity cables and keep them out of the way of the public, which was a significant health and safety risk.



This is the poster Immi designed, and we used to advertise our exhibition. Next to it is our initial floorplan with ideas of where things were going to be exhibited. As you can see, we had a floorplan of the three greenhouses so we could see how much artwork was in each room and where the entrance and exit to the exhibition should be.

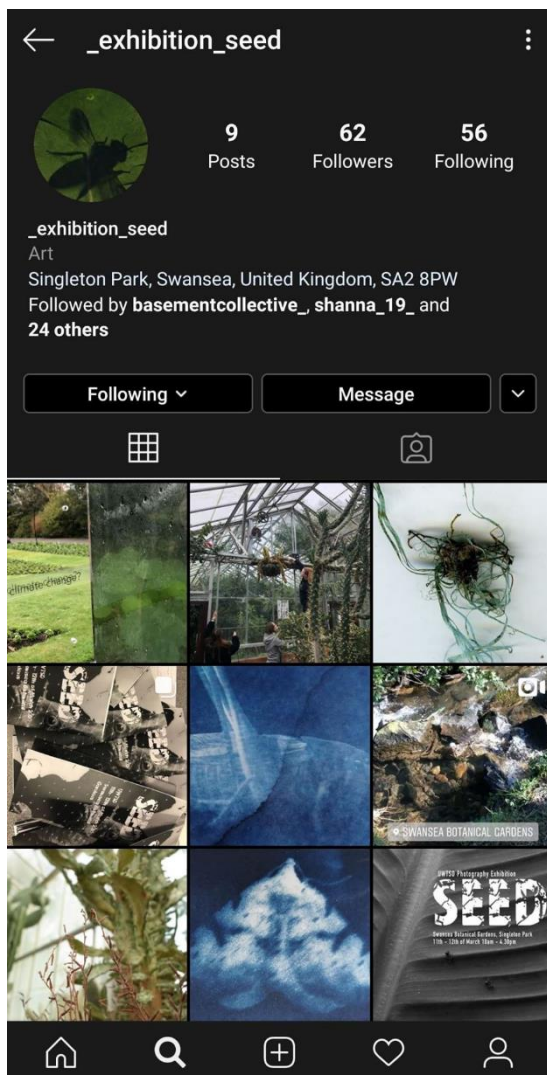




Here is the nearly finished design of the maps. We each put a short statement about our work and ideas so that the public could understand a little better when looking at our work. We also added numbers as a guide to where each student's artwork was. Below that image is an image of our final maps, which we folded like a leaflet and had our exhibition details on also.



Here is an image of some of the cress seeds we used in the 'plant me' envelopes in the zines. Next, we have the finished result of the map leaflets and the completed zines. We displayed them all in a box on one of the benches so the visitors could take a look and leave a donation if they wished to have one.



We also made an Instagram account to advertise our exhibition and inform the public of what we were doing. The page was a great way to share our ideas and keep people up to date. There is also an image of myself on a ladder setting up the speakers for the political speeches playing in the cacti room.

I think the overall exhibition was a success and it felt wonderful seeing people pick up my cyanotype booklets to have a look at when I was watching the exhibition on Thursday. Everyone in my group worked well and we had excellent communication throughout. I am happy I was put in this group and I would definitely collaborate with them all again. I enjoyed working with Sunniva and loved having the opportunity to work with new people and share ideas. There were a couple of stressful times when sorting out the electric for the speakers and projector; however, it all worked out. My favourite part was the speakers in the cacti room because the acoustics sounded so interesting as there was no background noise, and the overlapping of the speeches was different.