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The Plastic Crisis

Imagined Exhibition Display



Figure 1. Cardiff Bay

Plastic use has become a norm in everyday life for us as humans and unfortunately because of this every single country has contributed making it a worldwide crisis. Development of plastic products increased after the Second World War, making the convenience that it offered an easy life for people at the time and changing our lives in this present day accomplishing "medicine with life-saving devices, made space travel possible, lightened cars and jets" (Parker, 2019). Disastrously this led to a throw-away culture where 8 million tons of plastics are dumped in our oceans every year, it is chemicalising our oceans and killing wildlife (WWF, 2018). I have chosen 6 artworks curated by 5 artists that are inspired and want to inspire others to make a change, it is aimed to encourage and educate people to fight back and show that they stand with saving this Earth. The exhibition will be held outside The Welsh Assembly in Cardiff Bay including 5 artists; Sue Lipscombe, John dahlsen, Tess Felix, Nick Pumphrey, and Eduardo Acevedo.



Figure 2. Mock-up of the Bristol Whales in front of The Welsh Assembly

Cardiff bay is located 10 miles from the capital city of Wales, Cardiff, being the perfect place to exhibit. Cardiff Bay is known for its attractions especially in the arts industry including the Wales Millennium Centre, Butetown History and Arts center, the Norwegian Church Arts Centre and a stunning international arts centre. Additionally, having The Welsh Assembly building at the pierhead is an attraction in itself, especially for protests, news, and a place to express your beliefs.



Figure 3. Plastic in the water at Cardiff Bay

Having a harbour here gives the exhibition the insight and the proof of what the art represent. As stated by David Thorpe:

"Just 30 years ago, Cardiff Bay was dead — both environmentally and economically. For decades, the two rivers that feed into the bay — the Taff and the Ely — had been so black with coal dust, sewage, and industrial waste that no fish could survive."
(Thorpe, 2016)

However, as you can see in figure 4 is a clear image Photographed by Matthew Horwood (Horwood, 2018) of what Cardiff Bay's harbour has in its water. Now that the Bay is filled with pubs, restaurants, and cafe's it is more than noticeable that the pollution issue has not been solved. The beginning of the pollution issue in the water begins upstream with the Taff, Ely, and Rumney rivers collecting and washing into the Bay. The main source of his came from human activity that included sewage, industrial pollution, and incorrectly plumbed toilets and showers, and even a large volume of plastic and broken up polystyrene filled the banks of the River Rhymney (Flint, 2018).



Figure 4. mock-up of exhibition display

My exhibition will take you on a journey through a show and tell of images, with facts and information about the plastic pollution crisis. As you can see in figure 4 the artist's work will be displayed parallel to each other which will lead to your final destination of the Bristol Whales. Firstly, as you enter the exhibition you will following the direction of the arrows on the floor leading you to each stand of artwork. The collection will feature facts and thoughts of the artists of the plastic pollution crisis. At this point in the journey there will be silence, focusing on the cognitive evaluation theory, "a theory dealing with the effect of extrinsic rewards on intrinsic motivation. It assumes that intrinsically motivated behaviour is affected by a person's innate need to feel competent and self-determining in dealing with the environment" (Kent, 2006). This theory is supporting my decision on having the first part of the exhibition silent, having music or audio playing for everyone might affect the public opinion on each artwork. Silence allows them to take and process the information around you, the thought behind this to not distract or to take away any train of thought that you might be having about the art/topic, as said in a blog by CURINA "including a sound element could be like opening a can of worms, distracting visitors from the very thing that galleries are trying to steer attention towards" (CURINA, 2020).



Figure 5. stand mock-up including artwork



Figure 6. Stand mock-up including the artwork

Once you have finished looking at the imagery you will arrive at the Bristol whales and be given a headset that will play audio from the Food For Thought Podcast episode on Fighting Plastic pollution (Lambert, 2019). This audio is a great way to hear more facts and the emotion behind this crisis, as you can see the sculpture will be placed in a bigger area so that once you have finished there will be an opportunity to discuss the matter and your thoughts with others at the exhibition.



Figure 7. Caretta Caretta Turtle

As you walk towards the first artwork stand you will see the work of Spanish Photographer Eduardo Acevedo, Tenerife, named marine Conservation photograph of the year 2019. This image figure _ shows the Caretta Caretta (loggerhead) turtle entangled in a discarded fishing net, they spend most of their lives in the open ocean coming to the Canary island swimming the Atlantic Ocean from the Caribbean beaches. They often have to avoid traps

floating around in the ocean such as plastics, ropes, fishing equipment and so much more. (Beat, 2019).



Figure 8. Beth Terry

The second will be artist Tess Felix, in a series entitled "Ocean Eco Heroes" she transforms these artworks to start curiosity, conversation, and awareness. Using ocean beach debris as her medium to create her mosaic style portraiture she portrays activists, visionaries, scientists, filmmakers, and writers who use their voices to help battle the pollution crisis within our oceans.

"She builds up her compositions piece by piece over long periods, a fitting process to highlight the daily destruction of our marine environment by a steady stream of plastic bottles, baubles, odds, and ends." (CHANGE, 2015).

Activists Beth Terry as shown in figure 8, and authors whose books and blogs promote plastic-free living and solutions for reducing our plastic footprint. (CHANGE, 2015). Beth Terry found herself becoming an activist, author, and public speaker after learning about

the effects of plastic pollution and plastic footprint. (Terry, 2021) On her website she touches on targeting companies to achieve greater results and demanding a change from corporations that produce the product, finding alternatives in daily living and helping individuals take responsibility for their actions, and to build awareness.



Figure 9. Oceanic

Figure 9 captured by photographer Nick Pumphrey is the third artwork being displayed. While on a trip to Nusa Lembongan, an island located southeast of Bali, Indonesia he witnessed the devastating effect that plastic pollution was having on the ocean and its wildlife. When he dove to see the manta rays he was confronted by a lot of plastic packaging and bottles as you can see in figure 9. All the waste was caused by gattered rubbish in waterways being washed out to sea, local currents push the waste onto beaches such as Bali's southwest coast. Indonesia is the No.2 contributor to the ocean plastic crisis produces about 6.8 millions tons of plastic waste annually, and 620,000 tons of that waste ends up in the ocean (Gokkan, 2020)



Figure 10. Blue Ropes

The fourth artwork that will be displayed is a semi-abstract/landscape art created from plastic collected around Australian beaches by John Dahlsen. As you can see in figure 10 He used fishing rope, one of the biggest contributors to ocean debris. Ghost gear is known as fishing equipment that has been abandoned or lost in the sea, meaning that the increase of ghost gear in the ocean means that the volume of microplastics will also increase. Microplastics are minute pieces of plastic that have broken down over time in the ocean, meaning that the smallest sea life creatures are ingesting and making their way up the food chain to human consumption. (Protection, 2015).



Figure 11. Bristol Whales at night

The final part of the exhibition is the Bristol Whales by Sue Lipscombe, the life-size head of a humpback and a tail of a blue whale swimming through 70,000 plastic bottles made out of local harvested Willow in Somerset. All bottles upcycled and contributed from the Bath half marathon and the Bristol 10k these (Steaks, 2015) These Whales represent the beauty and fragility of the oceans and the increasing human threats that they face, the project shows how to conceive beautiful work that the public can interact with, the piece of environmental art is known as the greatest achievement on a global scale.

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