

Ways of Perceiving.

Essay: imagined Exhibition

Reimagining: Your Own Sustainability.

Curator: Saffron Harrison

Word Count: 1500 words + bibliography

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Welcome to my curated exhibition, here we are taking a deep dive into the narrative of sustainability in the Mission Gallery.

During this exhibit, I aspire to explore today's consumerism through the narrative of sustainability and sustainable development to represent the awareness of our own consumerism habits.

The concept of sustainable development was put forward by the International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural resources in 1980 (Dresner, 2008). However, Sustainability and sustainable development finally came into prominence in 1987, when the United Nations World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland, published its report *Our Common Future*. (Dresner, 2008)

Through using a collection of photographs, two large installations and two paintings, I aim to illustrate the surreal reality of our consumerism. I explore the idea of sustainability while interpreting each artwork within the exhibition.

I am optimistic that this exhibition will raise personal realisation in consumer habits and encourage the viewer to reevaluate what it means to become sustainable. This can launch through confronting both the inner and outer unsustainability of our present ways of living. (Peter Senge, 2008)

The arrangement of this exhibition holds a significant important on how I want to immerse the narrative of sustainability to the audience. It plays an additional part of provoking a sequence of thoughts to the audience in which the order and placement of the artworks are curated in. Throughout this essay my aim is to introduce the artist and artwork in the order in which I hope the exhibition viewers will encounter them.

The exhibition showcases the photomontage work of Barbara Kruger (1987), the photography works of Andreas Gursky (1999) Chris Jordan (2004-9). The installation work of Dianna Cohen (2005), El Anatsui (2007).

Chris Jordan is a photographer who has gained recognition for his powerful images of large-scale human consumption and waste providing a clear message to mankind on our consumption rates and disregardation of products and animals.

(ArtWorksForChange, n.d.). On the right-hand wall of the gallery hangs two photography works *Cell Phone Chargers* (2004), *Recycling Yard #6* (2004) that depict large disregardations of materials. Jordans images intensify the reality of waste and extreme landfills of items that have been mass produced and are no longer in use. His use of intense styles of capturing the landfills creates a likeness to the narrative of calling for a

sustainable world. This narrative is important as today more people are waking to the realization that we cannot continue in our present path (Peter Senge, 2008)

Opposing to the right, on the left-hand wall of the gallery hangs an additional two photography works of Jordan's *Circuit boards #2* (2005), *Unaltered stomach of a Laysan Albatross Fledging* (2009) continuing the dialogue. These photography works placed together intensify the use of manmade objects and the dismissal of animals that are overlooked. Jordan has captured a heart aching image of a deceased animal with manmade objects inside its stomach, this imitates the metaphorical reality of what we are doing to our planet earth. This is important for the narrative of my exhibition.



Cell Phone chargers, Atlanta, 2004, Chris Jordan, archival inkjet print, 44"x66"



Circuit boards #2, New Orleans, 2005, Chris Jordan, archival inkjet print, 44"x57"



Recycling Yard #6, Seattle, 2004, Chris Jordan, archival inkjet print, 44"x59"



CF000313: Unaltered stomach contents of a Laysan Albatross Fledging, Midway Island, 2009, Chris Jordan, archival ink jet print, 26"x32"

Applied straight across the curved wall in the exhibition, seen once walked through the archway is *Earths Skin* (2007) by El Anatsui an emerging contemporary artist. A wall hanging installation that is created through disserted aluminium and copper materials. (*Earths Skin* - Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, n.d.). the artwork highlights aspects of discarded materials across the globe. The artwork *Earths skin* (2007) mimics the delicacy and fragility of the earth's surface, this resembles a concept of how sustainable development can be used in a variety of ways and be interpreted to support a whole range of causes (Elliott, 2006). The large scale of this artwork is what I intended to emphasise when cross referencing with Jordan's series of photographs. My intention was to use this artwork as an example of how much space materials can take up, to shine further light on the complexities and messages of Jordan's images.



Earth's Skin, 2007, El Anatsui

Aluminium and copper wire

Approx. 449.6x1000.8cm

Guggenheim Abu Dhabi

Reflecting against *Earth's Skin* (2009) on the wall opposite to the archway is *flada* (2005). This installation artwork was created by Dianna Cohen, a proud advocate, co-founder and CEO for a new world without plastic pollution at *Plastic Pollution Coalition* (Coalition, n.d.). This work is created with plastic bags, handles and thread that were throw away materials. Cohen's work replicates the dangers plastic has to our environment, critiquing consumer culture while throwing eye catching installation works at the viewer. Interest in sustainability education and sustainable development is growing in higher education in both the UK and internationally (CSF University of Plymouth, 2010), Cohen's work provides a further narrative towards the education of sustainable development in reusing decorative plastic bags to create aesthetically pleasing work. The placement of this artwork is important to the narrative of my exhibition as viewers in the middle of the floor plan are able to view both large installations *flada* (2005) and *Earth's Skin* (2007) at the same time by looking left and right. This, again, is emphasizing the reality of the importance of a sustainable future by highlighting the intense experience of viewing the mass scale of the materials to then imagine the scale of the landfill's in which Jordan's artwork captures.



flada, 2005, Dianna Cohen

Plastic bags, handles and thread

274x122x31cm

ARTEINFORMADO

Andreas Gursky is a conceptual photographer, who is recognised for his experimentation in digitally manipulating his captivating photographs using new technologies of the time (Thebroad, n.d.). One of Gursky's most notable works is *99 cent* (1999) an image of a 99 cents store, Gursky manipulated this image digitally and printed it on Plexiglas. This artwork is talked about for its intense form of showing human consumption, this is an important narrative for my chosen placement within the exhibition. In the left cupboard area of the exhibition is where *99 cent* (1999) is found, where it can only be noticed if a viewer directly looks in that area.

Barbara Kruger is a conceptual artist, known for her immersive and bold statement photographs. Kruger's artwork *I shop therefore I am* (1987) is a highlight of consumerism in today's society, implying that consumerism is at higher value within society than intellectual and personal qualities (Public Delivery , 2024). In the exhibition, *I shop therefore I am* (1987) is placed in the opposite cupboard area.

The design purpose of putting both art works reflecting against each other in separate private areas was to create a second wave of a thought-provoking experience. Strong traces of consumer interest go well back in human history (Stearns, 2006) it is important that today's society move forward to generate a sustainable future ecosystem of health, vitality and resilience to guarantee its members can live and evolve (Peter Senge, 2008). By walking in and viewing *99 cent* (1999) I aim to create an intimate space between the artwork and the viewer, potentially bringing familiarity of impulsive buying in a pound

shop because the price tags are cheap. I aspire to imagine that this will then juxtapose with intimately being greeted with I shop therefore I am (1987) to create a light sense of wanting to become a person of a higher sustainable lifestyle.



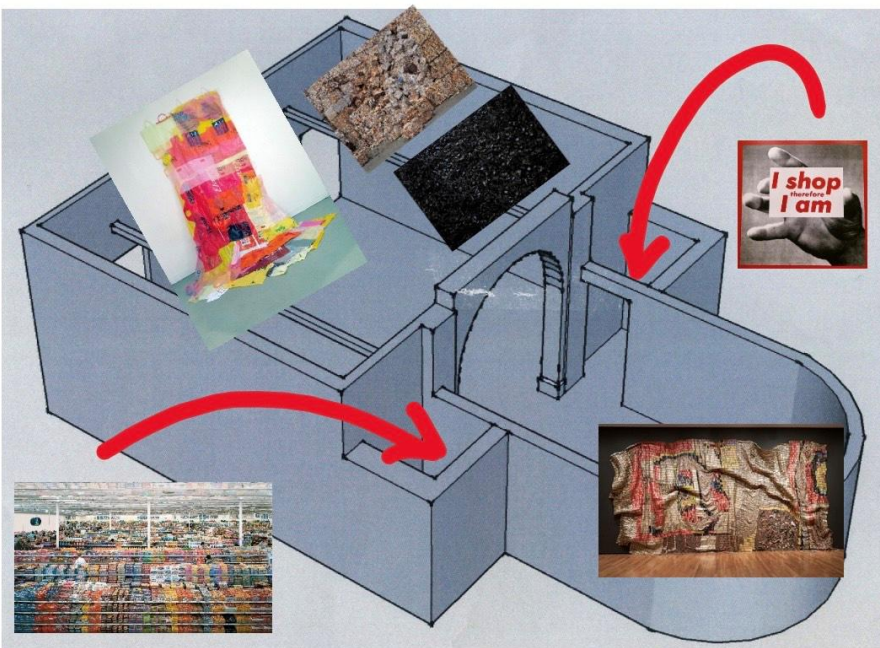
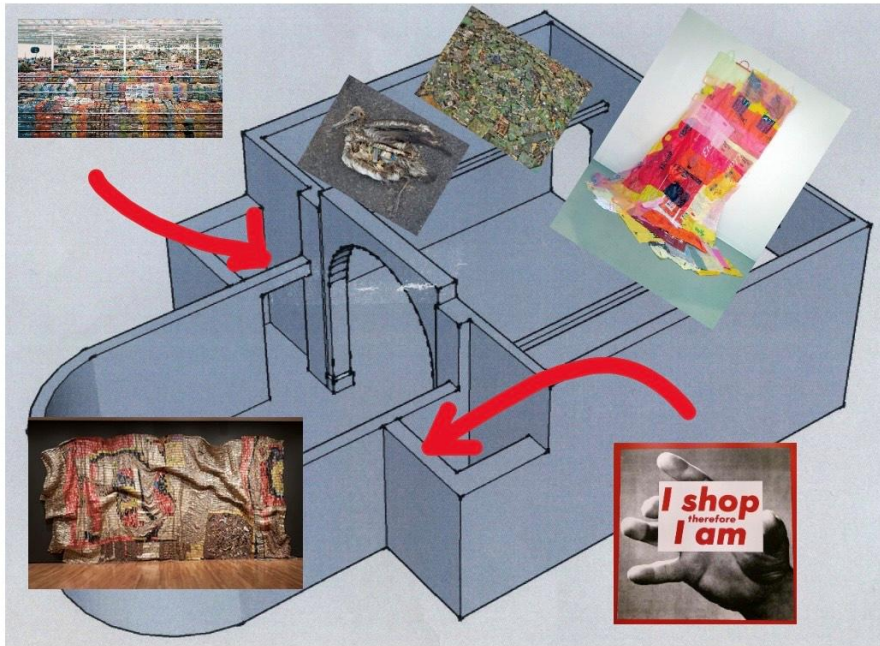
99 cent, 1999, Andreas Gursky
Large-scale Chromogenic print on Plexiglas
Approx. 81.5"x132.5"
SFMOMA



I shop therefore I am, 1987, Barbara Kruger
Screen Print on Vinyl
125x125cm
Photo: CC by 2.0 by Krossbow

My aim by the end of this exhibition is to start the discussion in the viewers personal life based off the text 'meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs' (Dresner, 2008). By this I hope the viewer will leave feeling as though they have been immersed in a thought-provoking experience of sustainability, to then question not only their own habits but the habits of others too. I curated this exhibition in the way I feel is the best combination of two separate waves that follow one another. The first being the viewing of artist work by Chris Jordan, El Anatsui and Dianna Cohen to be greeted with a harsh reality of material waste and scale. The second wave being the intimate spaces greeted by the artwork of Andreas Gursky and Barbra Kruger for a personal space of self-reflection.

Mission Gallery floor plan for exhibition



Details

Curation: Organised purposefully and thematically following the narrative.

Lighting: Overall lighting is dimmed; small warm lights are placed above each piece to give a sensation of drama.

Walls: The walls have been prepped and painted navy to contrast with the lighting.

Medium: A mix between sculpture and photography to emphasise scale and the reality of the narrative.

Dimension: a variety of dimensions accounted for within their specific curation.

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