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Assignment

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Save our oceans

The primary intention for this imagined exhibition is to raise awareness on ocean pollution. To do this effectively, it will showcase three artists who promote awareness on ocean pollution and make use of recycled materials in their work.

The Wales Wellbeing Future Generations goal: a Resilient Wales will be explored to investigate what it is doing to aid climate change. The exhibition will be displayed in Sea Môr aquarium, Goodwick, West Wales - a beautiful interactive educational research centre just off the beach. This venue has been chosen to raise awareness through arts. The location should enhance the issues of ocean pollution by showing the guests who and what are most affected. It is imagined that this will be effective

because people visiting the collection will be up close to the living creatures who are most devastatingly effected by related issues.

Alongside contemporary artworks, Llangwm baskets, the historical artefact of choice will be exhibited. These are a traditional Welsh willow baskets from Llangwm village, designed for cockle gathering, demonstrating how craft is shaped by local environment, materials and community needs. Six favourite pieces by two artists have been handpicked for display. These works have been selected due to the interesting use of recycled materials, the artists gather the materials themselves and both change them into something completely new. The first artist presented, Aurora Robson, is a sculptor who often suspends her sculptures from the ceiling or walls. The other, Bronwen Gwillim is a craft-maker working in the medium of jewellery. Gwillim makes earrings and necklace pendants from washed-up plastic sourced from the beach close to where she lives.

Aurora Robson is a Canadian artist based in New York, best known for transforming plastic waste into large scale artworks¹. She collects discarded plastics before they enter recycling or landfill systems transforming them into sculptures and installations. With a focus on plastic pollution, Robson creates her pieces in order to raise awareness of the ecological crisis the planet is in, she uses her art as a tool for awareness and behavioural change. She does this by turning waste into beauty, reimagining human consumption to evoke a sense of

¹ https://lociwear.co.uk/blogs/news/aurora-robson-environmental-artist?_kx=9OkcG-2YjknmL-HPZdMlFQrMM_dOKJaKBP-1geDa6jM%3D.UtcaRi&utm_campaign=20230327_Game_Changer_Aurora+%2801GWH7TK8FGM2MHY_GZWJWN3RW3%29&utm_medium=email&utm_source=email_campaign&shpxid=c4b32371-2eba-4dd5-8104-18f1ec68a936

responsibility to people and make them think about their own actions and how they affect the environment. The materials Robson focuses on are plastic bottles, caps and packaging, industrial plastic waste, junk mail and consumer debris to personalise and tailor these objects she will often paint and dissect them.

By contrast, Bronwen Gwillim is a Welsh artist based in rural Pembrokeshire. She is a contemporary jewellery artist and environmental maker known for her sustainable, material-driven practice.² Gwillim creates one off wearable art primarily made from waste plastic she collects from local beaches. Her process involves collecting plastic waste herself washed up on the beach, she then cuts shapes and forms materials by hand, often combining it with recycled silver and sometimes resin. Her work challenges the idea of plastic as disposable repositioning it as a valuable artistic material.³

Wales' environmental sustainability goal is defined by the Wellbeing of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015, which aims to ensure that the present needs are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own. A key part of this is the goal of 'A Resilient Wales'⁴ which focuses on protecting natural ecosystems, maintaining biodiversity and responding to climate change. This means reducing pollution, managing resources responsibly, and preserving the environment so it can continue to support lifelong term. Overall, the goal promotes a balanced approach where environmental protection, economic development and social wellbeing are all considered together to create a sustainable future. This goal

² <https://bronwengwillim.co.uk/>

³ <https://designnation.co.uk/blog/bronwen-gwillim-on-sustainability-in-her-practice/>

⁴ <https://www.gov.wales/well-being-future-generations-act-essentials-html#60668>

is relevant to the imagined exhibition proposed here because it describes a need to help the environment now so that it survive and thrive in future. Through the curatorial decisions made for this exhibition spanning craft, design and heritage practices, visitors can be invited to consider this political agenda and be inspired to make positive change. As the curator, I feel strongly about this subject and can use the arts as a vehicle to raise awareness, to activate people to help heal the environment and promote new innovative ways people can create art, be mindful of the materials they use and how their actions affect the environment.

Llangwm baskets are a traditional type of Welsh basket. They are an important example of local heritage craft, designed specifically for the needs of coastal communities engaged in cockle gathering. Llangwm baskets are handwoven and made out of mainly willow. These baskets are highly functional and can be adapted to suit their tasks as they are made with strong handles for carrying heavy loads and can be thickly woven to better withstand wet and salty conditions. They were traditionally made from locally grown willow, a natural renewable, degradable resource. The willow must be thoroughly dried after harvesting, before weaving each strand is soaked to make it malleable and easy to weave, this process makes the Llangwm basket an example of sustainable and low impact craft. These baskets are culturally important because they represent Welsh coastal heritage and show how craft responds to local environment and industry; they reflect the importance of a time before plastic containers and mass production. Artist-maker, Clare Revera specialises in basket weaving. Reviving the Welsh practice of basket

weaving to collect cockles⁵. Based in Pembrokeshire, Revera specialises in traditional Welsh basketry, with over 20 years of experience recognised for her craftsmanship and contribution to heritage craft. Her work combines the historic practice of basket making techniques and contemporary adaptations of her personal design. She creates her baskets to fit a range of purposes; functional baskets designed for shopping storage fishing and decorative pieces and garden/interior decor. Her practice is rooted in preserving heritage while innovating with it for modern use. As per tradition, Revera's baskets are primarily made from willow - she grows 30 varieties herself, following organic and biodiversity-focused methods.⁶ With this approach, she naturally promotes a sustainable eco approach to crafting. As well as willow Revera uses hazel, birch and other local woods. Llangwm baskets fit this exhibition theme: 'Save our Oceans' because these baskets showcase a time in history where pollution wasn't an issue, they used the materials around them to adapt to their needs, they are designed and hand made to fit a specific purpose. By bringing all the pieces selected together in one exhibition, the message is stronger – we wish to promote an urgency in protecting and nurturing our environment by using the resources that are already available to us. Whether that is ethically sourced, natural materials or repurposing the waste material that destroys our environment, it is possible to create something entirely new – the chosen artworks prove that both can be used in a beautiful way.

⁵ <https://www.welshbaskets.co.uk/about-us.html>

⁶ <https://basketmakersassociation.org.uk/makers/clare-revera/>

Conjointly this exhibition aids the Wales community goal by following the action plan of reducing pollution and waste and using resources sustainably. From a study visit to the National Museum in Cardiff, I noticed the use bright, clinical white light in some areas to illuminate certain displays like the geode/gemstone walls, highlighting the shimmering, glistening details to enhance their shine and be eye-catching to the guests visiting. I intend to employ this lighting technique as I experienced how effectively this works. However, in the proposed display of more matt surfaces – willow and eroded plastics, I will use softer, warm lighting to create a calm, tranquil environment, ensuring the pieces do not look harsh or out of place at the venue. Additionally, the lighting in this exhibition cannot be too extreme because it will harm the wildlife in the aquarium tanks that line the outside of the room.

In conclusion, this exhibition proposal, which should be of interest to Wales' climate crisis focus, successfully brings together historical and contemporary craft approaches to highlight the urgent issue of ocean pollution and the importance of sustainability. Locating the exhibition in an aquarium, an unusual setting for art displays, enhances the message. Viewers can directly connect with the living marine life affected by pollution.



Fig 1: Aurora Robson



Fig 2: Clare Revera



Fig 3: Bronwen Gwillim *Sandbanks Fibula Brooch*



Fig 4: Llangwm woman with fish baskets 20th century postcard

Reference list

Fig 1: Aurora Robson

Fig 2: Clare Revera

Fig 3: Bronwen Gwillim *Sandbanks Fibula Brooch*

Fig 4: Llangwm woman with fish baskets 20th century postcard

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