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Question One

'Using at least 3 examples, consider how image makers have utilised digital technology to explore at least one of the following: Conflict, the Environment, Identity, the Surveillance State, the Technological World?'

The question in which I have chosen to base my research in context around is question one. In my opinion, this question allows myself as a practitioner to discuss my beliefs and interests around a certain topic that I consider significant. Throughout this essay, I will proceed to discuss how image makers have utilised digital technology to explore the environment.

The environment is something that has always grasped my personal interest, especially within recent years and the on-going climate issues being faced. NASA have recently revealed that the effects of global climate change scientists have previously predicted are now occurring. NASA stated that these effects consist of ***"loss of sea ice, accelerated sea level rise and longer, more intense heat waves".*** As human beings, we only have ourselves to blame. One way in which climate change has evolved, requires burning fossil fuels - increasing greenhouse gases into the earth's atmosphere. This is so damaging to the environment, continuously changing the composition of the planet. Plastic pollution has also had a massive increase over recent years, resulting in all kinds of irreversible issues. Relating back to my practice, photographers around the world have captured these effects in imagery, allowing us to view them from various different sources. Photographer, Aragon Renuncio Antonio, captured a photo of a young boy playing with a plastic bag. The image is named ***'The Plastic Quarry'.*** The photograph really stood out to me as it appears to be a classic portrait shot at first glance, however, when studying, it most definitely has a deeper meaning behind what is being presented.

The portrait has been edited in black and white. Black and white imagery often portrays emotion more so than colour. It represents the picture being timeless, more serious, allowing the viewer to feel more of a connection with what is being illustrated. Written



The Plastic Quarry – Aragon Renucio

within the description of the image consists some facts about plastic pollution and the severe obstacles it withholds. This could potentially be to bring awareness to this matter and allow the audience to reflect upon their actions. The description states ***"every day approximately eight million pieces of plastic pollution find their way into our oceans".*** Some proven ways in which we can prevent this happening include, reducing our use in plastic bags - switching them for reusable, material ones instead. Most supermarkets have introduced bags for life – plastic bags that are made to last 10 times longer than the average. Another way we can incorporate change is by cutting our use of plastic water bottles, reusable ones are much more efficient. It is so easy to forget about the damages of plastic day to day – whether it be picking up a plastic bottle of water on your breaktime or a plastic bag at the checkout. Author, Michiel Roscam

Abbing wrote within his book *'Plastic Soup',* ***"plastic is the miracle material for mass production" (Abbing. M, 2019).***

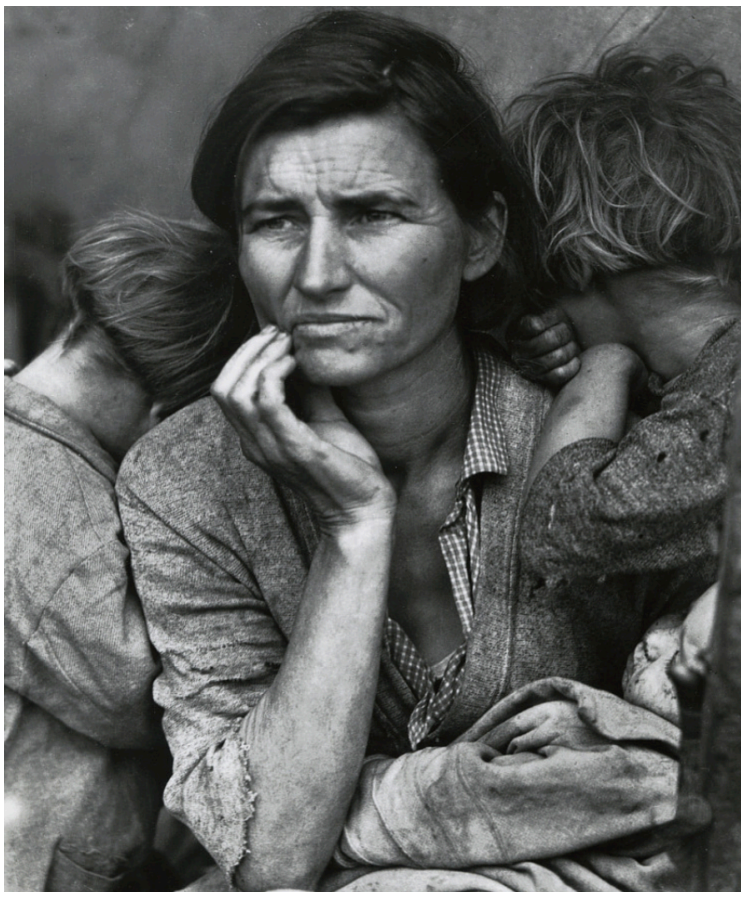
Relating back to *'The Plastic Quarry',* the image demonstrates a young boy in poverty. The negative effects of plastic pollution are massively affecting developing countries. Thousands, even millions of people are dying from illnesses ***"caused by living near uncollected waste and plastic pollution".*** Vice president at Fauna and Flora International, Sir David Attenborough stated, ***"It is high time we turn our attention fully to one of the most pressing problems of today – averting the plastic pollution crisis – not only for the health of our planet, but for the wellbeing of people around the world" (Attenborough. D, 2019).*** In poorer, developing countries, products are sold in single use plastic packaging. These countries unfortunately don't have the ability to discard of the plastic in any other way but to burn it in their streets. This may however resolve the build-up of plastic waste, but nevertheless in the long run can be extremely damaging to their health because of the harmful fumes released. A photojournalist who raises awareness about this issue is Hartmut Schwarzbach. German photographer, Hartmut Schwarzbach, won the UNICEF photo of the year award after successfully capturing the ***"three tragedies of our time: poverty, pollution and child labour"***. The photograph displays a young girl in poverty collecting pieces of plastic in polluted waters located in the Philippines. The truth behind this image reveals that many young children from these poor countries are forced to collect general waste from these contaminated waters in order to sustain their existence. Photographers like Hartmut are able to spread awareness about these kinds of issues through his work, giving more fortunate people an insight as to what's going on in other areas of the world that are not always shown on mainstream sources.



Image by Hartmut Schwarzbach

Social media plays a huge part in spreading awareness, allowing us to connect with each other through sites such as Instagram – where these images can be uploaded and shared. Fortunately, there are many other practitioners that focus upon poverty, educating more fortunate countries like the United Kingdom. Some of which include Alfonso Calero, SL Shanth Kumar, Dharshie Wissah, and Sebnem Coskun.

Possibly one of the most famous photographs revolving around poverty is ***'Migrant Mother'***, captured by Dorothea Lange. The image was taken during the Great Depression, portraying a mother and her three children, located in Nipomo, California. The mother in the photograph, also known as Florence Owens, sits with her children in what appears to be a makeshift tent. As previously mentioned, this was during the 1936 Great Depression. This was such a difficult time for many families, as they each desperately struggled. ***'Migrant Mother'*** always reminds me how real this situation was. The image appears so raw, reminding us how this is the biting reality for billions around the world, even today.



Migrant Mother – Dorothea Lange

The photograph showcases Florence Owens deep in thought, staring into the distance with a worried look upon her face. The way her hand is placed beneath her mouth demonstrates concern and worry. Her two children, leaning on to her, as if they are depending on her. The youngest asleep in her arms. The image portrays that the children feel safe and secure with their mother, as most young children tend to do. Black and white images are more than often used to convey emotion. The bleak, colourless image gives a sense of sadness, stepping into the mind of Florence and the severe responsibility she withholds as a mother during these challenging times. Photographer, Dorothea Lange stated when discussing the photograph ***"I did not ask her name or her history. She told me her age, that she was 32. She said that (she and her children) had been living on frozen vegetables from the surrounding fields, and the birds that the children killed. She had just sold the tires from her car to buy***

food*" *(Lange. D, 1936). This statement reflects on the poor lifestyle conditions this family were living in. Unfortunately, the great success of the photograph didn't change much about the situation.

On a more positive note, the environment can be explored by capturing different landscapes. Landscape photography is capturing shots of the outdoors and nature. This form of photography can be so broad, completely open to whatever the artist desires. Personally, this style of photography is my favourite, and what I focus upon most. Below are some landscape photographs I have captured.







My favourite part of landscape photography is the freedom. You are able to capture whatever you like and make your own art. Personally; I really enjoy making my images bright and eye-catching. I more than often capture images with bright, saturated colours, as this visually appeals towards most people. I really enjoy showing the true beauty of nature, in and around my local area. Experimenting and using different techniques within my work is something I always try to include each time. Some techniques I use often include are, depth of field, long exposure, black and white photography, and macro photography. In my opinion, using different techniques reflect on your skill as a photographer, trying new things allows you to improve as an artist. There are many landscape / nature photographers within photography, however, some of my favourites include, Galen Rowell, Carr Clifton, and Ansel Adams. Each practionier approaches photography in unique ways, adding their own personal touches. Whether this be the way the photographer edits the image, or how they capture it. Here are some images that really catch my eye.



Image by Ansel Adams

To begin with, the photograph above was taken by artist Ansel Adams. Ansel is known for his landscape photography during his era, back in the 1960s. His work was all shot in black and white, focusing about nature and the environment. One place in particular that he focused upon in particular was Yosemite National Park, allowing many picturesque opportunities. The park is full of mountains, waterfalls, trees, everything a landscape photographer could dream of.

Ansel's images always appear so clean and sharp. Within the image above, I am really keen on the lighting. The way the clouds are defined within the sky, allowing the brightness of the river and snow upon the mountains to stand out, in contrast to the darkness of the trees surrounding.

Another artist whose work intrigues me is Galen Rowell. This landscape photographer captures the environment through bright, saturated images. These photographs are so mesmerising and eye catching, instantly drawing in the attention of the audience.



Image by Galen Rowell

The colour contrasts in the image all complement each other, without being too overpowering. I really like the reflection of the sky in the river, breaking up the yellow and green towards the bottom of the image. Rowell may possibly have used the long exposure technique within this image, smoothing the movement of the clouds in the sky and the flow of the river. The water looks so still and smooth, a technique I am yet to perfect myself.

Showcasing and bringing to light to the environment and the issues it withholds, is very popular within art and photography. To do so, artists will showcase their work in exhibitions around the world, allowing any member of the public to interact.

One photographer who does this exceptionally well is Mandy Barker. Mandy captures all sorts of different objects and merges them into one image. The objects resemble the plastic pollution in our oceans, brightly saturated against a black background in order to stand out. The objects may appear small; however, they have a big impact.



Image by Mandy Barker

Artists like Mandy are able to go fourth and exhibit work surrounding these global issues and raise awareness through galleries and social media. The image is so intriguing with so many bright colours, inviting the audience to look more and more into what is being portrayed. Sticking with the theme of colour, this series of images Barker has created is suitable for all age groups, including young children. Personally, I think this is a great way to educate the younger generation on the effects of plastic pollution, and how they are going to become more responsible for saving our planet in years to come. It is best to educate younger children within the early stages of life, teaching them the importance of recycling and the benefit it withholds. Schools can have access to the internet in order to showcase these exhibitions to children, or even visit the exhibitions in person. As the problem of plastic pollution increases, more artists are focusing their work upon this ongoing issue.

Back in 2017, the company SKY created a giant whale made completely out of recycled plastic in order to raise awareness about the pollution in our seas. The sculpture was located in central London, in front of the tourist attraction Tower Bridge.



This sculpture was a marketing scheme to advertise a new and upcoming campaign to spread awareness. The location was the perfect spot where there would be many tourists sightseeing. The artwork is extremely eye-catching and is targeted at any age group. The colours used within the artwork represent the colour of the marine life, as well as being very striking.

Another artist to mention within this area is Andreas Franke. Andreas has previously exhibited a series of images called *'Plastic Ocean'.* These images contain various different people of various different age groups posing amongst brightly coloured objects representing pollution. The most unique feature about these images is that the artist exhibited them under the sea.



The litter that is shown amongst the people ***"was collected along the coast of Italy in a single day".*** This conveys the amount of litter that is within our oceans, what was collected for this photoshoot wasn't even a percentage of it.

The different age groups shown within the series portrays how plastic pollution is affecting all of us, no matter our age.



Image by Andreas Franke

Personally, I find these images so unique and touching. I've not seen anything like them before. The lighting is so clean, really capturing the emotion and expression on the subject's face. She's drowning amongst our own problems; the plastic seems to be engulfing her as it's too late to reverse our actions. The pop of primary colours from the various objects instantly grasps our attention and makes us focus upon them, they each individually compliment each other so well. Each of the floating objects are clearly

positioned, allowing the audience to identify what is what and recognise items we commonly use within our lifestyles.



Image by Andreas Franke

The most commonly used objects within this series include plastic shopping bags, plastic water bottles, ropes, fishing nets, plastic baskets, etc. Perhaps the photographer wants to portray how damaging these day-to-day items are and how to re-think our actions before discarding them, simply by recycling or reusing them.

To summarise, image makers and artists have used digital technology in many ways to explore the environment. Throughout this essay, I have focused upon how the environment is portrayed by artists in order to spread awareness about what is going on within our world that we may not currently be aware of. I have touched upon

poverty, pollution, landscape photography, and world problems. Whether it be through exhibitions or social media, the message is being put out there so we as the audience can rethink our actions, making the world a better place for generations to come. The environment can be seen in a positive or negative light, either way continuing to educate us, expanding our knowledge to remind us of how fortunate we are. Each artist I have researched throughout this process has had a completely unique outlook on the environment, there are so many more artists out there that capture a different perspective which I would really like to look into in the future and get an even better understanding of our planet.

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