

Plastic Matter

Seyi Adelekun, Maria Arceo, Camilla Brendon, Hilary Jack, David Kefford, Steve McPherson, Jill Townsley and Daniel Webb

25 February – 18 April 2020

Opening Reception 25 February 4–6pm

***Plastic Matter* brings together eight artists whose work explores the different aspects of plastic – as inspiration, material, resource and waste.**

We encounter plastic in our everyday actions; we buy it, use it and throw it away, we touch it as we type on our phones, travel in our cars and open pre-packaged food. Plastic is synonymous with modern life and an increasingly contentious issue. Plastic is essential to important industries and key to convenience. Yet plastic consumption and pollution, particularly in our oceans, is an increasingly critical subject matter.

The artists in *Plastic Matter* explore different aspects to plastic's story; its potential to become something more treasured, its availability and its hasty disposal. Through their work, the artists imbue new worth and meaning to the material and ask us to consider its role and future in contemporary society.

Seyi Adelekun is exhibiting her large-scale installation *Plastic Pavilion* (2019-20) which is an undulating canopy made of 1,600 recycled plastic bottles, filled with coloured water. Inspired by stained glass windows, the installation resembles a mosaic mural. Adelekun aims to raise awareness of the wasteful consumption of single-use plastic bottles, whilst promoting the beautiful and creative ways of making with recycled materials. Passers-by are encouraged to slow down and enjoy a sensory experience as they gaze above at the swaying bottles, and the rainbow of colours glistening in the daylight.

Maria Arceo's work responds to the sheer scale of plastic litter that is being deposited into our rivers. For the past few years, she has been collecting plastic from over forty beaches along the tidal river down to the Thames Estuary. Arceo's work builds on a deep-rooted fascination for both archaeology and oceanography. The exhibition shows a number of her works that invite us to question our perception of the environmental impact of plastic, whilst challenging us towards a more sustainable future.

Camilla Brendon is exhibiting works from her ongoing project, *Coast* (2017-20) which explores oceans and waterways in an attempt to improve ocean literacy and spark dialogue around wider marine issues in the global community. *Coast* combines art, activism, science and education to produce interdisciplinary work in which Brendon has collaborated with marine biologists, plastics researchers and water maintenance groups.

Hilary Jack's work has an activist element which comments on the impact of human activities on our planet. She is exhibiting 100 photographs of *Turquoise Bag in a Tree* which is an ongoing project of

images of windblown blue plastic bags stuck on trees. Members of the public are encouraged to collaborate in the work by sending their own sightings of turquoise carrier bags, and Jack has received images from all over the world since the beginning of this 17-year-long project.

David Kefford's *Pocket Sculptures* are small assemblages of found objects discarded by humans. Playful, intuitive, and transformative, they provide a sense of improvisation and incidental invention yet confront us with our own waste and the neglectful relationship between us and the materials we discard.

Steve McPherson sifts the detritus of life and presents it as evidence that we live in our own museums of marvellous mystery. His intricately assembled works not only highlight the problem of the amount of debris in the sea, but these wreckage pieces symbolise the history of the world up to this point – as contemporary and future archaeology.

Jill Townsley's time-lapse video documents her installation *Spoons* (2008) – a pyramid-like structure of 9,273 plastic spoons and 3,091 rubber bands. Over time, the rubber in the band perishes and the unit collapses, the whole sculpture experiencing a random decay. The materials return to plastic spoons and rubber bands. Townsley has also “infested” the Art & Design Gallery with plastic sculptural interventions which draw from her interest in repetition, pattern and structures.

Daniel Webb's project *Everyday Plastic* provides the public with a personal connection to the plastic problem, improving understanding and encouraging action through education and participation. Having stored all of the plastic waste he generated for a year, Webb counted, categorised, analysed and photographed every piece. In 2018, he was commissioned, along with photographer Ollie Harrop, to make a giant life-sized mural of his annual plastic waste, measuring 12.5m by 4m. The exhibition showcases *Mural-by-the-Sea*, a short film of this process, as well as Webb's *What we throw away and where it goes* – a seminal report co-authored with Dr Julie Schneider based on rigorous analysis of his collection.

“*Plastic Matter* highlights and celebrates the artists’ creative engagement with this problematic material”, say exhibition curators **Inna Allen and Elizabeth Murton**. “We hope that through artistic interpretation, the exhibition raises awareness of our plastic consumption habits and asks us to consider the potential of plastic.”

As part of the exhibition, UHArts is delivering a range of related events, including a creative plastic workshop with artist Camilla Brendon, and a Plastic Discussion Panel with artists and academics from the University. For further information and booking, please visit www.uharts.co.uk.

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For further press information, images and interview requests, please contact:

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Exhibition details

25 February – 18 April 2020

Open Mon – Fri 10am – 4pm and Sat 11am – 3pm

Art & Design Gallery, University of Hertfordshire, College Lane Campus, Hatfield, AL10 9AB

NOTES TO EDITORS

Seyi Adelekun

Seyi Adelekun (born 1993) is a London-based multidisciplinary artist, maker and architectural designer with a passion for using recycled materials to create sensory art installations that reimagine our public spaces. She graduated from the University of Nottingham with BA(Hons) in Architecture and is a member of Black Females in Architecture and RUSS Self-Build Community Land Trust. *Plastic Pavilion* has recently been exhibited at the Brainchild Festival and London Design Festival, and Adelekun facilitated a workshop at RIBA Festival of Learning. www.seyiadelekun.com

Maria Arceo

Maria José Arceo is a Spanish-born, London-based artist. She graduated with BA(Hons) in Fine Art from Camberwell Art School and MA in Art and Design Education from Goldsmiths, University of London. Arceo has exhibited widely since the 1990s, and recent exhibitions include *Miniscule at Venice Biennale*, Italy, *The Fight at Kunstgenerator Geneva*, Switzerland and *Plastico a Mareas* in Santiago de Compostela, Spain. www.mariajosearceo.com

Camilla Brendon

Camilla Brendon (born 1985) is a London-based installation artist and arts educator, whose work investigates sustainability and environmental activism. She graduated with BA(Hons) in Fine Art from the Kingston University in 2008. Solo exhibitions include *Coast - Hertford Union Canal*, Chisenhale Studios, London, *Mangrove, Mango*, London, and *Take Spaces and Make Them New*, touring in Colombia, Bolivia and Brazil. www.camillabrendon.com

Hilary Jack

Hilary Jack is a Manchester-based artist working across media in research-based projects, site referential artworks, sculptural installations and interventions. She graduated from Manchester School of Art with an MA in Fine Art in 2003. Upon graduation, Jack was selected for TIPP, a collaborative Post Postgraduate Residential Diploma with Goldsmiths College London and The Academy of Fine Art Budapest, Hungary. Jack has exhibited across the UK and internationally and her work is in a number of private and public collections including recent acquisitions for The Government Art Collection and Manchester Art Gallery. Hilary Jack is represented by Division of Labour. www.hilaryjack.com

David Kefford

David Kefford (born 1972) is a Cambridge-based artist who graduated with MA in Fine Art from the University of Brighton in 1999. He is a founding member of artist run group, Aid & Abet, and Co-Programme Leader in BA Fine Art at University of Hertfordshire. Kefford's work has been extensively exhibited and commissioned in the UK and internationally, including *The Feel of Things*, Bangladesh Shilpakala Academy, Dhaka, *Pocket Sculptures*, Art at ARB, University of Cambridge, and *Sequences VII: Real Time Arts Festival*, Iceland. www.davidkefford.com

Steve McPherson

Steve McPherson (born 1972) is a Margate-based marine plastic artist whose primary source material are the discarded plastic objects that wash ashore on his local Kent coast. He graduated with MA in Sculpture from Winchester School of Art in 1998. He has exhibited widely in UK and

internationally, including USA, Germany, Switzerland, Finland, France, Bulgaria and Italy. His work is held in private, public and corporate collections worldwide. www.stevemcpherson.co.uk

Jill Townsley

Jill Townsley is a Huddersfield-based artist and Senior Lecturer in Contemporary Arts at University of Huddersfield. She graduated with MA in Sculpture from the Royal College of Art in 1995 and with a practice-based PhD from Liverpool University in 2010. Townsley has recently been working as an Artist-in-Residence at the JRC laboratories in Northern Italy, exploring coherent patterns of data and representing them in visual artwork. Solo exhibitions include *Sisyphus*, Huddersfield Art Gallery, Huddersfield, *TOIL*, Project 4 Gallery, Washington DC, USA and *Moments of Repetition*, The Nunnery, London. www.jilltownsley.com

Daniel Webb

Daniel Webb (born 1982) is a Margate-based creative who is behind the *Everyday Plastic* initiative. He has worked in marketing for 10 years across a range of sectors including art, music, food and drink and sport. Webb has had an active interest in conservationism since 2015 which led him to launch *Everyday Plastic* in 2017. He delivers talks on the project at schools, businesses and events and works with major environmental charities such as Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and Surfers Against Sewage. *The Mural by the Sea* film is by Tom Shrapnel, funded by Dreamland and curated by StudioTAC. www.everydayplastic.org

About UHArts in the School of Creative Arts, University of Hertfordshire

Sitting within the School of Creative Arts, UHArts offers a vibrant arts and cultural programme for the University of Hertfordshire's campus and local communities, working cross-arts with artists and performers. With a programme of exhibitions, performances, residencies and engagement projects, UHArts delivers excellent, innovative arts and culture with associated research; offering space for artists and performers to experiment, and audiences to engage and co-produce. Working in collaboration with St Albans Museum + Gallery, and other key partners, UHArts presents off-campus exhibitions and events, displaying works from around the world in new contexts. For more information, visit www.uharts.co.uk

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