

Artists' statement. 2013. SUSAN A HALL. V.A.S. M.V.A.

When I moved to the coastline a number of years ago, I did not realise the impact it would have on myself as an artist, and the changes it was to have on my art practices.

Walking the coastline had begun for me purely as an exercise program. As time went on I began to explore the coast further, noting the changes in the tides, the purple sand crabs scurrying along whenever they heard my footsteps in the pristine sand. I marvelled at the unique sand patterns left in the wet sand by the crashing waves as they sucked endlessly back to the ocean. This action was to become a starting point.

Environmental awareness evolved for me over pleasant times spent Painting 'Plein Air' around the Australian coastline and overseas. On my walks I collect plastic in many forms; discarded bait bags, sheet plastic washed up by the tide, as well as the everyday shopping bag; odd thongs, plastic tent pegs, balls, polythene rope and fishing line; all items that become hazardous to marine creatures.

The materials I use are discarded plastic objects I collect on the beach. I have fused sheet plastic, baits bags and the common supermarket bag to create a four meter mandala shape, reminiscent of a whirlpool collecting the toxic flotsam circulating in the ocean currents.

In another work '*Drift*', I have printed discarded plastic hay bale netting on to a long roll of plastic, the type used to contain the contents on a wooden pallet. This work I see as reminiscent of the drift nets all too readily discarded in favour of the catch into our oceans and reaping havoc with marine life.

My current work addresses my concern about the amount of plastics continuing to find their way into our oceans. I make art work from recycled consumer plastic that will hopefully make a statement, and encourage awareness. Society needs to think about the plastic used and discarded daily, and the detrimental effect it is having on waterways and oceans worldwide. A recent study by oceanographer Moore¹ and colleagues discovered areas in the Northern Pacific Central Gyre are found to contain by weight six times more plastic than zoo plankton. Seabirds in the Pacific Regions contain large amounts of plastic residue in their stomachs, many die from ingesting large pieces of plastic.

Researching the word conservation I came across the work of American artist and cultural activist Photographer/Filmmaker, Chris Jordon.² Jordon walks the fine lines between art and activism, abstraction and representation, beauty and horror, the visible and the invisible. His work asks us to consider our own multi-layered roles in becoming more conscious of our complex and embattled world. Like Jordon my work considers the growing amounts of plastic that is polluting our oceans and killing ocean going birds and animals. In the transparent areas of my work '*Whirlpool*', does the viewer see glimpses of a healthy ocean future, or last gasp windows into an eco-system about to be lost forever, because of the tidal movement of plastic garbage floating on the surface of the ocean? surely it is only a matter of time before the chemical make-up of the ocean is transformed, killing the base of the food chain, affecting all marine and human life in some way.

¹ Moore, C. (2012). Plastic Oceans. N.Y., Avery Penguin.

² Jordon, C. (2012). "vimeo.midway film " midway. Retrieved 3/5/2013, 2013, from <http://vimeo.com/midway/midwayfilm>.

