

Practitioner's Statement

Oceans of Rubbish

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I have always had an interest in environmental issues, social justice and raising awareness for important causes. At the point in time that I was starting this final piece there was a lot of attention in the media about coral bleaching and the Great Barrier Reef being destroyed. I wanted to have a piece that reflected the current issues and that will cause conversation or cause people to think about their own actions and how that affects the environment. I noticed that as I worked on my piece the media's attention slowly faded away. The day that I finally finished my sculpture the Great Barrier Reef was pronounced dead as more than a third of the reef has been affected by coral bleaching. Art is a way of raising awareness in the viewer's mind of how critical a problem or question is. This is the most important time for this sustainable message to be spread.

Rod McRae, a Sydney artist had recently exhibited *Wunderkammer the Cabinet of Wonders* in Adelaide which caused mass waves of interest on environmental issues artwork. For the exhibition, he created a coral reef out of old cleaning products and used fish skeletons to illustrate the demise of the reef and the sea life. I further explored the notion of the representation of marine life suffering in a dying habitat in my own piece. I wanted my piece to be confronting and make people stop and think about the environment. I did this by including a wire sculpture of an albatross, a fish created using old tools along with my own plastic version of a bleached coral reef. These three sculptures would be placed in large fishbowls full of water to further support the oceanic theme.

I hoped for the fish to be an accurate representation of how industrial enterprises, specifically the mining industry are causing harm to the environment. The fish was made out of rusted and recycled tools, the most important aspect of this sculpture was keeping the tools together using liquid nails and water proofing the rust using a clear varnish. The colour of the rust in comparison to living coral is bleak, which maintains the industrial look and representation of the piece. The albatross was inspired by the works of Celia Smith, a wire artist that creates birds using recycled wire materials. I kept the inside of the bird empty whilst layering the outside of the shape with wire to give it a three dimensional almost skeletal look. The bird was painted black upon completion, the same colour of oil that has devastating effects on marine life. By placing rubbish inside the empty stomach of the albatross I aimed to show that human pollution has caused many deaths and has endangered these creatures. Lastly; the plastic reef was created as a representation of bleached coral. This was done by using strategically placed objects covered with beads to add a coral like texture. The coral reef was then glued together using hot glue and spray painted white before and after assembly.

Together the three pieces spread the important message to its viewers of the affects of humans on our environment. To the viewer I am hoping that my art can influence and reinforce the environmental debate. Similar to Rob McRae "I would like to believe that art can make a difference".