

Practitioner's Statement

Glitch in Nature

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A goldfish confined within a plastic bag enables its temporary survival. Invert this concept and it's plastics within aquatic ecosystems that are killing organisms. The permanency of plastics' properties ensures its indefinite influence on the environment, thus we have created a 'glitch' in the natural cycle.

Recalling a 2012 Catalyst programme on ocean plastics, it was apparent that little has changed in the urgency of this issue. Evident when viewing the 2016 Waterhouse Natural Science Art Prize, artists still respond to pressing environmental issues that are a result of human actions. My piece 'Glitch in Nature' denotes the human influence of biomagnification on aquatic organisms.

I was influenced by Bronwyn Kirkman's work 'Albert's basket – a gift to the gods', in the 2016 Waterhouse exhibition, which utilised juxtaposing symbolism centring on gold bones to explore the concept of "transposition." Translating this to my piece I chose to depict a fish within a bag as they are juxtaposing 'sides' of the ecological issue; the foe – plastic bag, confining the victim – the goldfish. Furthermore, the symbol of a 'fish in a bag' has deep roots in ideas of childhood and innocence, alluding how this ecological issue transcends to the heart of our youth in the significance of plastic toys.

When exploring methods of presentation I was inspired by the photorealist cityscapes of Richard Estes. His paintings of New York serve as important documentations of the past. Transposing this into my piece I aim to represent the subject with high precision. I was further influenced by contemporary hyperrealist artist Michael Zavros' paintings in the 2016 Adelaide Biennial. His use of contrasting white backgrounds and centralisation of the subject ensure that objects he depicts remain at the forefront of the viewers' attention. Within 'Glitch In Nature' the fish and bag remain the only focal point; the oversized canvas (48") draws further attention into the piece. This hyperrealist piece was derived from a photograph I took of my own goldfish.

The process of painting the piece was initially challenging as I am new and inexperienced in working with the oil medium. This was overcome through completing thorough studies prior to commencing the final piece. Challenges arose in the collation of reference images as the fish was uncontrollable whilst within the bag. Yet the results this produced strengthened the concept. When the fish was placed within the bag its image became distorted with the curvature and creases in the plastic; mimicking the actual ecological effect plastic is having on aquatic organisms. The choice to feature a goldfish also has strong connections conceptually. Orange is a colour associated with signalling hazards (evident in traffic signage), therefore its usage acts as an, "symbolic representation of potential danger" (fatrabbitt CREATIVE, 2016). There is an urgency in exploring this issue as "we have reached a point where nothing taken from the ocean can be considered organic" (Catalyst, 2013). Plastics entering the food chain are contaminating organisms and inevitably, will contaminate us.