

Artist statement

Significant microplastics (38-234 particles per cubic metre) have been found frozen in Arctic sea ice, having seemingly been derived from the Pacific Ocean (Obbard et al., 2014). The Arctic is thus a major global sink for these tiny plastic particles. However, melting at current rates could unlock over one trillion pieces of microplastics over the next decade (Zalasiewicz, J. et al., *Anthropocene* 13 [2016] 4-17).

The five biggest concentrations of marine debris are in the Indian Ocean, the North and South Pacific and North and South Atlantic. This year Moore [US Oceanographer Charles Moore] reported finding one spot in the Pacific gyre where there was so much accumulated rubbish you could walk on it (Reed, C., *New Scientist* [31] Jan [2015] 28-32).

If there is one overarching conclusion we can draw from the current science on fishes, it is this: fishes are not merely alive – they have lives. They are not just things, but beings. A fish is an individual with a personality and relationships. He or she can plan, learn, perceive and innovate, soothe and scheme, experience moments of pleasure, fear, playfulness, pain and – I suspect – joy. A fish feels and knows. How does that knowledge mesh with our relationship to fishes? (Balcombe, J., *What a Fish Knows* [2016] 207).

The impact of plastics on the marine environment which threatens the survival of marine life underpins these works of art. The artist engages with ecological concerns and aesthetics in a distinctive manner for ethical purposes, bringing a sense of disquiet to the artwork. The aim in making art is to engender reflection about the kind of life (and death) we impose on sentient marine creatures and plant life, and the impact of human agency on the habitat of living species. The deep moral concerns about the ever-increasing amount of plastic that has ended up in the oceans at play in the works of art belie the works' appealing form. The works of art respond to the ecological crisis, drawing on science in their considerations of aesthetics and ethics. These deliberations inform the conflation of beauty and dread, and allure and anxiety and provoke further contemplation of these terms and the effects of plastic on the planet.