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How art and choreographic objects can be used as a catalyst for environmental change: Specifically, in relation to the plastic pollution crisis.

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Introduction:

Plastic Pollution Expressed Through Art

Art allows people to relate to vast and often unfathomable concepts by engaging the heart and the senses. Art can break down big issues into small, digestible pieces. Art compels thought, helps us feel and process emotion, starts conversation and sparks creativity. Artists can say difficult things to people through their medium, messages that might not go down as easily if they were conveyed only through words. Art also allows artists to communicate with speakers of other languages. An observer's reaction to art can translate into caring, determination, and action.

Moyer, 2017 [online]

In this paper, I will be reflecting upon how dance can be used as a catalyst for environmental change, in relation to the plastic pollution crisis. Plastic Pollution has been expressed through many different art forms, profiling powerful ways of communicating the issue and playing a significant role in society to express points of view politically, economically, socially, culturally, and environmentally. 'Art can break down big issues into small digestible pieces' (Moyer, 2017). Moyer articulates my rationale for this project and my personal feeling towards the global crisis, as well as my desire to explore the capacity of art to contribute to the relief effort through shifting opinions. Through making a work for public consumption I aimed to present the damaging effects of plastic pollution, from a creative perspective. With the objective that audiences might be more open to listening and being educated on the topic, when facing facts through an artistic experience. This will hopefully result in a physical change, no matter how small. Even if only one person decided to make a change because of the impact of my work, that's one person more than yesterday. With issues as urgent as the plastic crisis, there is added immediacy for art forms to respond in support of people who want their governments to act; public messages can and will get disheartening. (White, 2020 [online])

The climate crisis is a priority for Arts Council England, and therefore the topic I am exploring is current and relevant in the professional sector. They state in their guidelines that 'The climate crisis and environmental degradation is one of the most significant challenges facing us all. The cultural

sector has taken major steps to reduce its carbon footprint and more than ever artists and organisations are engaging with climate-related themes' (Arts Council England, 2021).

I want my installation work *Open Your Eyes* to be something that I could develop in the future and potentially take to different events as a means of highlighting the issues and influencing change. The topic of Plastic Pollution also has the possibility of attracting funders/ promoters to support my work, therefore this adds more relevancy and a need for this work to exist in the professional sector, to make change happen.

In his article *What the World Needs Now is Art, Sweet Art*, Bill McKibben, author and environmentalist, stresses that though we know about climate change 'It hasn't registered in our gut; it isn't part of our culture.' ([2005, online]) McKibben suggests that as humans we are aware of how the planet is deteriorating and how we are contributing towards the climate crisis, yet some people don't feel the need to help unless they are being faced with a problem themselves. For example, they might watch the news and see the forest fires in Australia and hear that the thickness of the Arctic Ice has decreased by 40% since the 1960s, yet they will continue to leave plastic waste on the beaches and rubbish in their local parks (McKibben, 2005[online]). McKibben mentions how, 'When something is happening everywhere all at once, it threatens constantly to become backdrop, context, instead of event.' (McKibben, 2005 [online]). The idea of 'backdrop context' which McKibben mentions is something which I have explored in my own choreographic process. I will discuss this further in chapter 2.

The research questions which I will be asking throughout this project are:

- How have choreographers previously used topics surrounding environmental issues to encourage change?
- Why should art be used more to highlight environmental issues?
- Can art portray the plastic pollution crisis with greater impact than a written document/source?
- Do members of the public listen more when they learn about the problem through art? Does an image/video/painting/dance performance create more of an honest insight into the issue?

In chapter 1, I will be researching dance and the environment. The writing will home in on research carried out by theorists and dance practitioners who have previously made links to the importance of dance as an artform to spark change when discussing political and economic issues. I will use

the writings of Alexandra Kolb, Frank Möller, Bill McKibben and Stacey Prickett to inform my research, as well as installations by Bright Ugochukwu Eke and other artworks to inspire the creation of my own work. I will also refer to choreographers who have previously created statement art, including Loyd Newson's work with DV8 Physical Theatre, Davalois Fearon, Jody Sperling and Lynn Neuman.

In chapter 2, I will refer to my own practice as research, including references to my choreographic influences and a breakdown of tasks used to inspire the creation of *Open Your Eyes*, my installation work. The orchestration of the theory in chapter 2 will be developed within a practical context and therefore there will be more attention focused on the methodologies used within the choreographic process. I will reflect on how field work and outdoor explorations contributed to my practice as research, as a way of connecting with different elements of the outdoors. I will get my audience members to fill out a questionnaire, after experiencing my work, as a way of tracking if the installation/experience was effective/if it educated the audience in any way/if it evoked change/if the audience could see this work being performed in a specific site/to a specific audience and to ask them to provide any additional comments or feedback for future development.

Chapter 1:

Are Humans to Blame? An exploration of statement art.

Statement Art is being used now more than ever before, as social, political, economic and environmental issues have raised, and people want to address these problems with the intention of enforcing change. The physical patterns of climate change are becoming clearer and clearer. Alongside those physical changes, attitudes are also shifting.

Arts Council England have prioritised global warming and climate change in their funding requirements, and more than ever before artists and organisations are engaging with climate-related themes. Arts Council England are looking to support a move beyond environmental sustainability ‘towards true environmental responsibility’. This means ‘embedding environmental thinking in everything you do, from operations and logistics, to considering how creation, programming and partnerships can help support your commitment and provoke debate’ (Arts Council England, 2021). This gives more of an objective to my research topic and adds a weight and relevance to this project and rationale as it is a critical issue now.

Alexandra Kolb reflects on the impact that state and governmental politics have on dance. She writes that ‘If we subscribe to the notion that dance needs to be positive and uplifting to justify state support, we risk depriving it of its disruptive, risk-taking or “disenchanted” potentials.’ (Kolb, 2011:31) suggesting that sometimes to get a point across, artforms might have to include elements where the audience is made to feel uncomfortable and/or vulnerable. Kolb then continues to write that ‘if we believe some contemporary theorists, it is exactly the latter functions – the “basic disrespect for tenability or positive affirmation” and the “transgression of taboos” (Lehmann, 2006:186)¹. This idea of ‘counter-construction’ is something which I considered thoroughly in the making of my own work. I wanted to include elements of both ‘positive affirmations’ and ‘transgression of taboos’ to create a dance installation work which would highlight the plastic pollution crisis with the objective of stimulating movement.

¹ We thus imperil a significant medium which can provide a plausible counter-construct to the political status quo.’ (Kolb, 2011:31)

In the article *Politics and Art*, Möller discusses artistic and performative imaginations of the political; knowledge production through art; art's engagement with violence and peace; the art-audience interface; ethics and aesthetics of political art; and art's function as a political witness (Möller, 2018).

Research on politics and art explores art's engagement with politics and its vision of the world; it analyzes art's contribution to both our understanding of politics and problem solving. Current research also explores art's critical and emancipatory potentialities, as well as participatory art and social activism in light of new forms of political communication.

Frank Möller, 2018

I used the writing of Möller to enhance my understanding of Politics and Art, as there were many layers in which I needed to break through in order to make my installation work as informed and statistically correct as possible.

I chose to create an installation, as I felt it was an effective way of giving the audience a personal experience that they are able to immerse themselves in. Making the audience feel vulnerable in the



space is something I hoped to achieve, as every person on this earth is guilty for contributing to plastic pollution in one way or another and I believe that in order to make people realise the extremity of the problem, they need to be brought back to reality and faced with the facts.

An installation which I took inspiration from, which was created to bring awareness to the

current global warming problems, can be found in Copenhagen, *Acid Rain*, by Bright Ugochukwu Eke. This installation consists of 6,000 hanging plastic bags. They sparkle, grey, clear and black, like Christmas decorations, but they contain carbon dust – currently choking the inhabitants of the delta region of Nigeria, an area of massive oil exploration. At first glance, the work of the Chinese artist Yao Lu appears



to be a perfect landscape of mountains and clouds, but if you look more closely, you'll see that it's



an urban waste dump (Ugochukwu Eke, 2015). The way in which this installation is cleverly constructed is something which I was inspired by in the creation process of my own work. The way that my eyes were tricked into seeing a beautiful work of art, before the darker reality was exposed. I wanted to take the idea of exposing what could be a perfect reality if people are to

make a change before pulling this image apart to reveal where we are currently at in terms of the current plastic pollution crisis. The hanging bottles in my installation were inspired by Ugochukwu's work. I hung 30 plastic bottles from the theatre rigging, these bottles represented the 3,000,000 plastic bottles which are sold every 60 seconds in the UK (Plastics: Why we must act now, 2021). I wanted to give the audience a visual representation of the damage we are causing, without purchasing the plastic (to me, this totally contradicted the reasons for me wanting to create this work), so all of the plastic used during the work was sourced from family, friends, work colleagues and even my neighbours and I recycled everything suitable at the end of the process.



Another dance artist who challenges the conventions of space, time, medium and identity in his work is William Forsythe. Forsythe, an internationally celebrated choreographer, who breaks the boundaries of contemporary dance and demand a widening of perspective, as much from his dancers as from the audience. Forsythe displays a freedom of thought that seems to be interested in all aspects of contemporary culture². Forsythe's work has always inspired me as a dance artist, as he reveals undiscovered possibilities for choreography and his approach to creating new work is exciting and inventive. In the words of Forsythe, "To reduce choreography to a single definition

² Forsythe presented his first solo museum exhibition in ICA, United States, titled 'Choreographic Objects'. (Neri and Respini, 2018.)

is to not understand the most crucial of its mechanisms: to resist and reform previous conceptions of its definition.” (Neri and Respini, 2018.)

Lloyd Newson’s work with DV8 Physical Theatre was a huge influence in my dance training also, and therefore his work inspired me to create an installation which was of a more political nature. DV8 Physical Theatre's work encourages risk taking, aesthetically and physically, it’s about “breaking down the barriers between dance and theatre and, above all, communicating ideas and feelings clearly and unpretentiously” (dv8 Artistic Policy, 2021). They are determined to be radical yet accessible, and to take its work to as wide an audience as possible. This is something which I believe is so important in order to make a piece of movement art, because everyone needs to be able to access it in order for it to have its biggest impact³.

Multiple choreographers have previously created works highlighting environmental issues as a way of encouraging change. However, I believe that art should be used more to highlight environmental issues because, as stated in *Dance Magazine* online, “The physical, interpersonal nature of dance has the unique ability to transform people's understanding of the world around them. Movement can lay the foundation for a sense of connection with the earth” (Loeffler-Gladstone, 2018). In Davalois Fearon’s work *Consider Water*, two dancers are seen randomly distribute cups to audience members and a third pours water into some of the cups. “The symbolism allows other audience members to glimpse what it feels like to be denied a resource” (Loeffler-Gladstone, 2018), overlooked and ignored. Fearon usually convenes a post-show discussion with experts. "It's an opportunity for audience members who are suspicious, or who don't understand the issue, to engage head-on," Fearon says.

Jody Sperling's *Bringing the Arctic Home*, which premiered in 2015, was inspired by her experience accompanying a scientific mission and dancing on Arctic ice. "I felt charged by this very remote place," she says. "It gave me a strong sense of immediacy." Now, she's working on a project about changing wind patterns (Loeffler-Gladstone, 2018).

Art can depict the plastic pollution crisis with greater impact than a written document/source, this is made evident in the work of Lynn Neuman. Lynn Neuman, director of New York City-based

³ DV8’s work inherently questions the traditional aesthetics and forms which pervade both modern and classical dance, and attempts to push beyond the values they reflect to enable discussion of wider and more complex issues. (DV8 Artistic Policy, 2021)

Artichoke Dance, became preoccupied with single-use disposability after she started wondering about waste and who was responsible for it. For some of her performances, she has collected massive quantities of discarded plastics, like bags and six-pack rings, and invited community members to contribute their own⁴. "Being engaged in a process, particularly a physical one, helps people to not ignore what they know," she says (Loeffler-Gladstone, 2018). This was the exact aim for my work, helping people to not ignore what they know” and to be more inclined to make a change, and also increase their role to encouraging people around them to also make a change in their behaviour towards the plastic pollution crisis. Do members of the public listen more when they learn about the problem through art? This is a question which we will never have a yes or no answer, however, I believe that the use of imagery/videos/paintings/dance movement and objects of a creative nature attract people and give them an honest insight into the issue.



Butterfield, 2018

⁴ "There's a real aha moment when people see how quickly plastic amasses," she says. This hands-on, visual component gets people involved in Neuman's process, interrupting their habitual response to pollution (Loeffler-Gladstone, 2018).

Chapter 2:

Exploration and analysis of PAR for performance.

My practice as research has been a phenomenological process, which began with online workshops, which later progressed to studio exploration, filming outdoors, discussions with the dancers, using the set to influence movement, the use of public opinions to form text within the work and finally the use of other artworks and ‘choreographic objects’ to inspire different elements of the installation work. My dancers and I created many different potential sections throughout the process, however, only 6 made it into the final installation work.

To begin my practice as research I decided to organise a series of zoom workshops, where I explored multiple ideas in relation to my research questions and the dancers who took part helped me figure out what I was interested in exploring for my choreographic work (See Appendix 1). There were four workshops in total, and I recorded each one so that I could potentially use the footage in my final installation work. I didn’t end up including this footage as over time my ideas developed and they were no longer relevant to the work, however I think that by doing these workshops I was able to form a lot of ideas which I then took into the studio to develop further.

I began my in-studio practice as research by asking my dancers what they knew about the plastic crisis, how it made them feel, if they thought it is being shown on the internet and social media enough, what they do to help reduce the amount of plastic they use daily and asking how they felt about the topic in general. It was important for me that my dancers felt as passionate about the topic as me because I didn’t want the emotions throughout the piece to be fake in any way. This work to me is a movement, and to make it as honest as possible, I needed my dancers to be on the same wavelength as myself. This initial discussion led us to listing different plastic items which would be interesting to explore, we chose bottles, netting, bags, bottle tops and sheets. I didn’t want to buy these items, because, to me that would defeat the reason why I was making the work. So, to source the plastic in a way which was helping re-use plastic instead of purchasing it first-hand, I asked friends, work colleagues, neighbours and even mattress shops – Which to my surprise, they were happy to help. Working in retail, I see how much plastic comes through our doors when we get our delivery and every single time it is so frustrating to witness. Items which

are unnecessarily wrapped in plastic, items which are individually packed in small plastic concealable bags, the plastic bags that are used to dispose of all the rubbish which also comes from the delivery. It's something that really angers me, and when I asked if I was able to take 'some' of the plastic which came with delivery, I found myself walking home with 6 huge bags full. In this case, it is a problem with the production of plastic, as well as consumption of plastic. I'm sure as a company, most of my colleagues would like to see a reduction in the amount of plastic, which is used in the deliveries, however from a store assistant point of view, there is nothing that we can do from our level of importance – It is a problem which the managers and CEOs of the company would have to discuss. The process consisted of trial and error and exploring ideas until they became something which I wanted to explore further.

To create my installation, I was inspired by William Forsythe and his 'Choreographic Objects'. The idea of my dancers embodying the exhibition premise and becoming moving sculptures within the installation was something that I really wanted to explore, as I felt that this would make the work a lived experience for the audience, instead of them just sitting back and watching the work from a distance. Forsythe "extends the practice of choreography beyond the realm of professional dance to reflect on the concept of movement as a mindful expressive act for all human beings." (Neri and Respini, 2018) The way in which Forsythe creates his work is so clever, and sometimes so simple yet so impactful. Forsythe believes "Even if it is just moving your hands, sometimes I just rearrange my fingers. It is a way of thinking. The body is a thinking tool." (Neri and Respini, 2018) Through the medium of choreography, Forsythe explores ideas that resonate with some of the most daring artistic experiments of the past fifty years. Sometimes his 'choreographic objects' are neither optical nor purely aesthetic, but they are conceived as a set of problems and relationships, Forsythe would describe it as a "combination of perceptual systems" (Neri and Respini, 2018. P13)

For the first section of the work, myself and my dancers went out of the studio to film. I wanted this film to be a simple yet an impactful visualisation of what it would be if humans were physically trapped in plastic. I looked at images of animals and marine life that are suffering as a result of the plastic crisis and I set up an improvisation where my dancers had to embody the feeling of being trapped in various forms of plastic, attempting to break free. I wanted this film to come across as otherworldly from an audience perspective, so I edited it in a way that makes the movement seem

effortless and very freeing, yet the dancers are stuck under plastic and unable to escape. The film appears ironically beautiful because the meaning behind the film is rather dismal and upsetting, yet the music and the movement seems of an angelic nature (See Appendix 4).

The second section of the work shows the dancers moving underneath plastic sheets attached to the entrance of the studio, using natural light to create a shadow effect with the bodies through the plastic sheets. The music accompanying this section is 'Orcas Reprise' by Jayda G, this song incorporates whale sounds into an ambient dance track. Jayda's thesis research for her degree in environmental toxicology focused on the effects of human activity on the Salish Sea killer whales, which are listed as critically endangered due to increased tanker traffic. This is yet another huge global problem which is damaging our marine life, so I wanted to use this song as a way of paying tribute to the marine life which has already been taken. I wanted the plastic sheets which the dancers are under in this section to look like the sea and the natural lighting enhances this, by creating a deep-sea feeling. The darkness, the never-ending sensation, the visualisation of drowning, uncertainty of what is around you and the idea of looking up towards the sky from beneath the water line. The movement in this section consists of pressing body parts against the plastic sheets, creating ripples, looking through the layers of plastic and searching for a way out – Even though there isn't one.

The next section is introduced when there is a lighting change, three boxes of light appear in the space, revealing netting, carrier bags and a huge plastic bag, the dancers make their way through the audience to get to the boxes and as they step into the light, it's as if they've entered a portal. The dancers then perform choreographed movement to the song 'Water' by Sudan Archives. The choreography in this section was created using scores based on the dancers' medium of plastic. Dancer 1 explores netting and how the feeling of being trapped in netting creates tension and a feeling of pulling to and from different body parts. Dancer 2 moves within a big plastic bag and the idea of acceptance that there is no way out, with contrasting moments hope and an urge to break through the layers of plastic. Dancer 3 discovers pathways amongst plastic bags and bottle tops, as if she is lying on a seabed of plastic, which unfortunately, is something that isn't uncommon in a lot of countries. Dancer 3 constantly has her focus on the back, whether that be the back side of her limbs, the back of the space, the back of the plastic in which she is exploring – This idea is to symbolise how people are still turning their backs on this global crisis, deciding

to remain ignorant to the changes that need to be made in order to help decrease the amount of plastic that is being consumed and disposed of daily.

The final section of the work is more political and is a way of highlighting what we, as humans need to do to make a change. What are the solutions if there are any? The dancers begin by approaching a big pile of plastic which has been piled up around a normal waste bin and they start by examining the waste as if it has never been used before, they then start to dispose of this plastic waste around the whole space, walking around and amongst the audience members in the process. Whilst they do this, they are saying facts surrounding plastic pollution, including statistics from the Greenpeace website. The aim of this section is to make the audience feel as though they are being bombarded with information and statistics, whilst being surrounded by plastic. There will also be a video projected on the wall during this section (See Appendix 5), showing plastic on shores around the world, huge piles of plastic and a clip from ‘Wasteminister’, a film created by Greenpeace campaign, set on Downing Street⁵. The voiceover used is a mixture of the discussions which I had with my dancers and us listing plastic ideas which we are aware of that people use daily. Towards the end of this section dancer 1 says the line “in the past 60 seconds 3,000,000 plastic bottles were sold” and then she begins to count down from 60. The dancers then start to move around the space frantically as if they are running out of time. They stop and pause when she gets to 0 and by this time the voiceover will reach the point where dancer 3 says, “It’s just for the image.” Then they will begin to collect the rubbish in, piling it up next to the recycling bin. This is a moment of realisation for the audience because they will notice that the rubbish wasn’t placed by the recycling bin to begin with, and they will also realise that we have reversed the process of the plastic being dumped back to the ‘recyclable’ state. When the plastic is piled up the lighting cubes in the centre of the space re-appear and the dancers enter the light once again, this time they say a line which is linked with the solutions of plastic pollution/what we can do to help, whilst they say their second line they begin to exit the light and walk backwards so that they are looking in to the space, at the audience.

⁵ What you see in the film is the amount of plastic we dump on other countries every single day. That’s on average, 1.8 million kilograms a day – or 688,000 tonnes a year of our plastic waste that is fuelling health and wildlife emergencies around the world. Plastic kills hundreds of thousands of marine birds, sea mammals and turtles every year – but it’s not just harming wildlife and our oceans, it’s harming people too. Plastic being sent overseas is being dumped or burned in the open air, with local communities in Turkey and Malaysia reporting serious health problems, like respiratory issues, nosebleeds and headaches. We have all lived through a health emergency over the past year in the form of Covid-19. But by dumping our plastic waste on other countries, the government has been fuelling another health emergency for even longer. (Greenpeace, 2021)

Bill Mckibben mentions how, ‘When something is happening everywhere all at once, it threatens constantly to become backdrop, context, instead of event. And in this case, since the context is the natural world that more and more of us have forgotten how to read, the changes seem small.’ (Mckibben, 2005 [online]). This is something that I notice daily, the idea of ‘backdrop context’ which Mckibben mentions is something which I explored throughout the creation process in order to bring the problems caused due to plastic pollution into the forefront. To do this in the most effective way, I decided to reach out to an organisation which is known for defending the natural world and working for a green and peaceful future. Greenpeace has inspired me a lot throughout my process and I am proud to say that I contribute towards helping them do what they do. I emailed them to ask if they would be able to send me some leaflets so that I could give them to audience members after the performance and they were so grateful that I had chosen to create an installation on this topic, as a means of making change and they agreed to send me some leaflets for the show. I was so happy that they responded to my email, as I was able to communicate my passion and frustration towards the plastic crisis with people who also feel the same way as me and I felt like their email response added a deeper aspect to my research. (See Appendix 2)

Another element of research which contributed to my process was finding out what my friends and family had to say about the topic. I put a question out on my social media accounts (Instagram and Facebook), asking people “What do you think about the plastic crisis? What are you already doing to help reduce the amount of plastic you dispose of daily?”, and I also asked them to give any other additional comments. See responses in Appendices (Appendix 3). It was interesting communicating with people of different age groups, as it highlighted that no singular age category is to blame, people of all age categories need to make changes.

Conclusion

After having an audience to experience my installation work, I asked them to fill out a questionnaire, to gather thoughts/opinions and views on the topic of plastic pollution and if their opinions had changed/been enhanced having witnessed my work. I have included some of the responses which I received in my appendices. (See Appendix 6)

On reflection, I feel as though I could've included more elements of hope in my work and created clearer visual representations of making positive change, so that this element of the work wasn't as abstract. The final section of the installation consisted of the dancers' transporting plastic from the rubbish bin (which was also representing the ocean) to surround a recycling bin. This was a representation of reversing the damage that has been done by taking the first step and recycling plastic instead of throwing it in the normal waste bin. This is something so simple, yet many people still fail to recycle. I feel like this message might not have been clear enough, and if I was to develop the work, I would home in on these details more.

As a choreographer and a creator, I would've liked to have taken my work to the next level by having more dancers in the space and more plastic. However, with the current global pandemic, I was unable to have more dancers, so this could be something that I will consider for my future practice. Also, I would love to work with organisations to create works that help to educate people about global issues that aren't always spoken about to a great extent on social media and on news channels. This work has the potential to reach audiences of a larger scale, however, I definitely think that I would have to add more choreographic elements, as this is something which the work lacked.

I would've also liked to have included more elements of interaction, to make the work more immersive from an audience perspective, however this idea was only considered from the later part of my creation process, and I didn't want to waste vital time adding more elements to the work, when I had other things to focus on. Overall, I think that my installation work did have an effect on most of the audience members, as the comments which were left seemed positive in relation to people wanting to do more to reduce the amount of single-use plastic which they use and people were reminded of how involved they are in contributing towards the problem and they felt shocked by the statistics which were mentioned during the work.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Zoom Workshop Plans

Zoom workshop 1:

- Explain to the dancers what I am planning on doing for my dissertation. Talk to them about Global Warming and Climate Change and see what their opinions are first off – Record this information by writing it down.
- Talk to them about what I will be asking of them - Give them the dates and times of the rehearsals and ask them if it's okay if I record the sessions for my own use and potentially for performance.
- Have a little warm up improvisation.

Task 1

Close your eyes and take a deep breath. Really try to let your breath travel all the way through your body and down to the ground. Try and make yourself so grounded that nothing could push you over. As if you have roots coming off your feet going all the way down beneath the floor you are standing on. Imagine being in the middle of nature, anywhere. Take in the surroundings, and just enjoy being amongst the natural world, enjoy this moment of calmness and really try to connect with the idea of being free in this setting. Start to imagine how it would smell in your chosen setting. Does it smell how it should smell? Does it smell polluted? Are the scents familiar or alien to your senses? Feel the temperature of your surroundings. How cold or hot is it? Is it hotter or colder than what it should be in that place in the world? Are there animals? If there are, are they living in a habitat that would be considered normal to them? Or have they been removed from their natural habitat and placed in the one which you are imagining yourself in? Try and take yourself further away from the setting now, imagine you are seeing a birds-eye view of the ground which you were just standing on. Does the larger picture look just as good as what you initially imagined? Or does it look worse? What do you see? What colour is the sky? Are there buildings? Vehicles? Are there trees, or even oceans? Is there noise, or just the sound of your own breath? Have you seen this place before or is it completely new to your minds-eye? Now start to move slowly, really taking into consideration how this setting makes you feel. Are you comfortable? Feeling at home? Or is it somewhat unsettling? Let your body move, with no expectations.

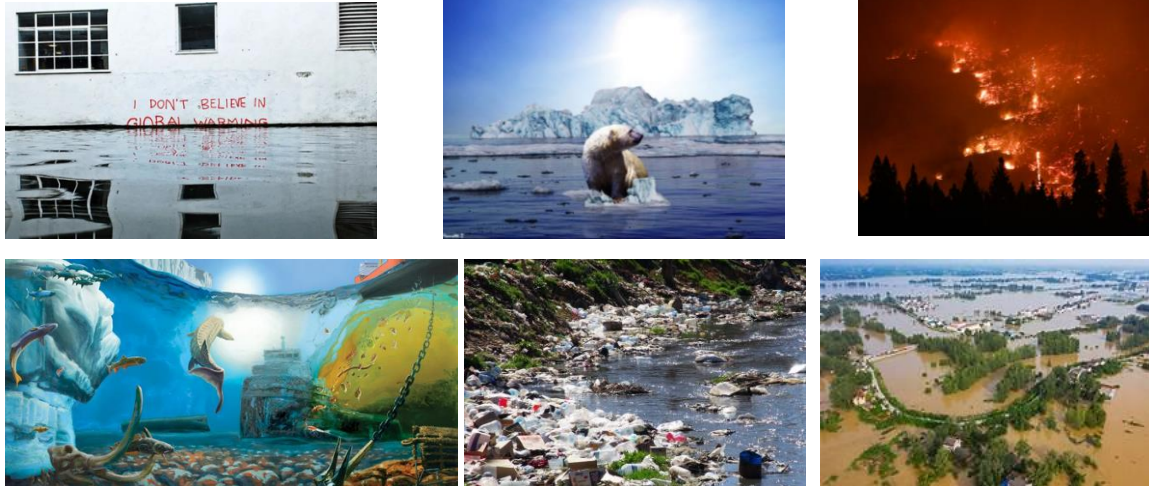
Get my dancers to write down any thoughts they had from the task, whether that be singular words to describe the things they imagined or sentences of the sensations that they felt throughout the task. I will then ask my dancers to read out some of the things that they wrote down (if they are comfortable doing that), and then I will ask them to keep these notes for further exploration.

Task 2

My dancers will then take what they have written and improvise for 10 minutes, using the words as inspiration for movement. They can embody these words in whatever way they feel is right to them in the moment. I will then ask my dancers to think about the dynamics they are using and if these dynamics correlate with the words they are imagining – If the words are more negative, are the dynamics sharper? If the words they are being influenced by are more positive, are they smoother/more fluid.

Task 3

I will show my dancers these images...



Then I will ask them the following questions:

- Are these images shocking to you or have you seen ones like them multiple times before?
- How do they make you feel?
- Are you aware that these are all a result of global warming and climate change?
- How do these images make you feel like?
- Do you feel like these problems have been caused by humans?

Zoom Workshop 2:

For this workshop dancers were required a blanket, something they would consider to be 'rubbish' (plastic bag or bottle) and a piece of paper and pen.

Manipulation Task

- How can the rubbish be moved out of its original form?
- How can the rubbish become a dance partner in the space?
- Can the rubbish manipulate our human body?
- What sounds can be made from these household items? As a collective can we make a score?

Show the dancers video - **Melting Ice/Changing Winds continues the collaboration between choreographer Jody Sperling and composer Matthew Burtner** – Get them to improvise using the blanket as inspiration for changing winds.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Yomf5pBN8dY>

Zoom Workshop 3:

Videos to show dancers:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EBmwfs2LSdU> (Potential start of piece)

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uRgJ-22S_Rs Greta Thunberg

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DhhVr5iLF-c> Climate change

Facts:

The Earth is heading toward a "global tipping point" if the climate crisis continues on its current path, scientists have warned, as they called for urgent action to avoid "an existential threat to civilization."

The group of researchers, who published a commentary in the journal Nature, say there is growing evidence to suggest that irreversible changes to the Earth's environmental systems are already taking place, and that we are now in a "state of planetary emergency."

Arctic melt: Threat beneath the ice

A global tipping point is a threshold when the planet's systems go beyond the point of no return -- such as the loss of the Amazon rainforest, accelerated melting of ice sheets, and thawing of permafrost -- the authors of the commentary say.

Such a collapse could lead to "hothouse" conditions that would make some areas on Earth uninhabitable.

"We argue that the intervention time left to prevent tipping could already have shrunk towards zero, whereas the reaction time to achieve net zero emissions is 30 years at best," the authors said.

Task

How do these videos and facts make you feel? Can you create a visual representation of how these facts could be communicated through movement instead of words?

How is emotion shown throughout the videos? Does this change the way we view them? Could this be used as choreographic tool?

What are your thoughts as a dancer, but also as a human being affected by the current climate crisis?

Zoom Workshop 4:

Outdoors Improvisation Task

Task

Find a place outdoors that you feel you can connect to on a deeper level, really ground yourself in the earth and embrace the safe feeling, you are at home with your surroundings. Explore the obstacles around you, whether that be trees, grass, earth, flowers, a bench. Will you acknowledge passers-by, or will you remain alone with your exploration? How does this place in this moment feel? Safe, unsettling, peaceful, busy, loud, or awkwardly quiet? Take a moment to connect with everything about the space surrounding you. How does the air feel? Can you hear birds chirping? Is the sun nursing your arms? Are there people watching you, wondering what you're doing? Enjoy this time of exploration and take note of how it makes you feel and if you feel different in the surrounding after exploring a little.

Thoughts having completed the improvisation

Jasmine - Blinded. Brain boggled. Till I sat with a tree and saw the daffodils sing.

Hattie – I felt energised by the spring air and I felt rooted to the ground. It felt good to have space to dance and not be restricted by four walls as we have been for so long.

Courtney - Warmth, I almost felt hugged by the sun. My movement was expansive as I wanted the sun to almost cover the shaded parts of my body, I exposed the areas that would normally not be presented.

My eyes were closed a lot of the time, so it felt very internal, an internal warmth. I also played with shadows, I had my back to the sun and created patterns on the door, it was cool to see a grey shadow, almost reminded me of peter pan lol where you would play with your shadow or try to chase it/catch up with it. I felt youthful.

Appendix 2 – Greenpeace Email Conversation

My original email:

Hello,

I am Bonnie Simons, a dance Masters student at the University of Chichester. I chose to use the topic of Plastic Pollution as my dissertation topic, and I have been exploring how art can be used as a catalyst for environmental change. Both dance and the environment are huge parts of my life, and it angers me how oblivious and ignorant some people are when topics as huge as plastic pollution are brought up in conversation. I would like to mention Greenpeace in my dissertation, and I was wondering if it would be possible in any way for you to send me some leaflets about Greenpeace, which I could hand to the audience as a way of promoting change and movement - As this is one of the main reasons behind me wanting to create the work in the first piece. I understand that this might not be possible for multiple reasons, but I thought that I might as well at least ask.

Thank you so much for all you do,
Bonnie Simons

Response:

Hi Bonnie,

Thanks so much for getting in touch and for your wonderful support, I hope you're safe and well. It's so great to hear you're using your art as activism to draw attention to the plastic pollution problem, sounds like an interesting piece of work! ❤️ My lovely colleague in the office has found some leaflets to send you, they should be with you shortly.

It's an issue close to my heart too - I did my first direct action with Greenpeace recently, we dumped a truck full of plastic waste on Downing Street to highlight our disgraceful record of exporting our recycling overseas (I'm in the middle with the hard hat on here >> 🧑🏻🧐 😊 https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/downing-street-boris-johnson-plastic/?utm_source=SS).

I've made a filtered list for you of all the plastic updates on our website which should be helpful if you want to find out more about our campaign work on this issue >>

https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/latest-updates/?category=plastic-pollution&news_type?utm_source=SS

We're really grateful for all of your support. It's entirely down to lovely people like you that we're able to campaign, lobby government, and act to protect the natural world - so, thank you!

Please let me know if there's anything else I can help you with? In the meantime, please take a moment to read about Cambo chaos: the oil field embarrassing the government ahead of the COP climate talks

https://www.greenpeace.org.uk/news/cambo-chaos-oil-embarrassing-government-ahead-cop-climate-talks/?utm_source=SS

Thanks again, I hope you're having a lovely sunny afternoon!

With best wishes,

Eilidh

Supporter Services
Greenpeace UK
0330 335 3632

GREENPEACE

My reply:

Dear Eilidh,

Thank you so much for your email, I wasn't sure if I would get a reply or not! I am so happy that your colleague has managed to find some leaflets, I will be putting them in the theatre foyer and handing them out to audience members!

I would love to be a part of something like that, as I feel like in order to get our voices heard, we need to really shout! I watched your Greenpeace video of the plastic drowning Downing Street and I found it so powerful, I used it as inspiration for one of the sections of my work.

Thank you for making that filtered list, this will come in so helpful for my writing and future research!!

Yours Sincerely,

Bonnie

Appendix 3 – Comments from friends/family about Plastic Pollution

“It’s never too late to make changes, however small they may be. We could all shop more carefully, use farm shops or supermarkets that are selling food without plastic wrapping.”

Jane Grant

“I would like to know more about how plastic sent for recycling in the UK ends up in landfill or swept up on beaches in other countries. As someone who takes recycling very seriously this worries me that we can think we're doing the right thing, but it still ends up as dangerous litter in other parts of the world. Also, I would like to see discount supermarkets such as Aldi selling more loose fruit and veg without packaging so you can buy as much or as little as you need cutting back on both plastic and food waste. Personally, I think COVID will have set things back hugely, so many things are now single use/disposable, even just taking all the lateral flow test items into consideration. a positive note I'm glad to see that Tesco now have facilities to accept soft plastic film such as bread and crisp bags for in-store recycling, I dropped off my first bagful this morning.”

Shona Hamill

“Wean yourself off disposable plastic, straws, cups, spoons and forks etc. Don't buy bottled water as often.”

Margaret Shepherd

“The plastic crisis is very real and very worrying, but in many ways the disabled community is disproportionately affected due to single-use items, such as straws, being banned or heavily demonised. There are many ways which those who are able can reduce their own unnecessary plastic consumption without causing harm to those who need access to single use plastic items for access (end).”

Zelda Crew-Williams

“The fact that it is a global problem, and proved to be one, should be enough of a lever to make all countries respond in some way.

The fact that our own country contributes to this problem. In other countries, by exporting our plastic waste, should be made more aware to our population. Those behind this business and it must be a business (someone is making money from it) should be heavily fined. The distribution chain should be severed. For this we would be dependent on the government and our MPs and lobby them. There possibly may be some M.P.s with a vested interest in this market and would resist change.

It is never too late to make changes on a large scale. The main thing needed for big changes is to reduce the use of plastic as far as possible. New technology is needed to come up with new products that are safe, e.g. maize packing chips, which unlike polystyrene dissolves in water and can be composted. Polystyrene is a by-product of oil. We need biodegradable products wherever possible. New technologies using solar and wind power, could replace fossil fuels in some processes. Oil being refined for fuel for transport, heating etc, produces by products which are used to make plastics, reduction of these by products could force the use of more recycled packaging. Card, paper, metal, aluminium foil, and cotton can be recycled, some composted. There is no reason why bubble wrap cannot be replaced with paper and cloth.

It would be worth interviewing some of the older generation who were about when there was little or no plastic used every day, to see how we managed then. Glass, grease proof paper, paper bags. What else did they use? Earthenware for bread, tins for cake etc.

Daily we could refuse to use plastic packaging as much as possible. Reuse the plastic that we do use e.g., Plastic containers from take aways can be reused again and again, to store food in fridge or freezer. To store buttons beads nails etc. Plastic fruit containers for strawberries or grapes have holes in the bottom so, I use them to grow seedlings, filled with compost there is good drainage. Glass jars can also be used to store food as well as other items, e.g., a jar of pasta or left-over soup etc. can go straight into the microwave when needed without the lid of course. If the domestic plastic was reused at least once by most of the population that alone would reduce the plastic waste by a huge amount. Buttons from discarded clothes are usually plastic and could be reused. Paper carrier bags are a much nicer alternative to plastic. Take your own bags shopping. Home deliveries for groceries can be had with no bags, just in crates. Recycled brown paper from Amazon parcels can be reused with strips of recycled materials to tie them up, no Sellotape

As things are it would be almost impossible to not use plastic in our everyday life, but we can reduce the use dramatically and gradually by finding through research suitable biodegradable alternatives. This needs to be a global effort, for governments and manufactures who so often just see profit as their aim. Education could play an enormous part as well, as most children have great influence with their parents and quite frankly, they need to protect their future.”

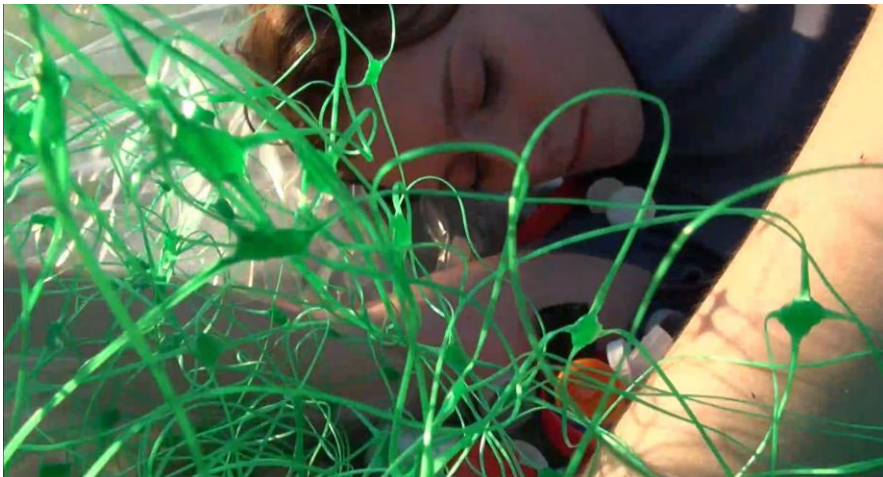
Sheila Conway

“We should all absolutely shop smarter when it comes to plastic. Fruit and vegetables have very little need for plastic. Why are cucumbers wrapped? They have a skin of their own for protection. There are plenty of zero waste refill shops starting to spring up all over the place, where you can bring your own containers and purchase loose rice/pasta/dish soap/detergents by weight. I wish supermarkets would introduce things like that. Swapping out items for compostable alternatives such as toothbrushes & cotton buds. Swapping plastic shower gel bottles for soap bars. Swapping plastic toothpaste tubes for boxes of toothpaste tablets. Plastic free deodorant and tea bags. Ban single use plastic bags. I want that to happen so badly. I do find a lot of companies 'greenwash' items to sound more eco. The standard of making the packaging look like brown paper and saying it's all compostable. Yet some of the materials will still take years to degrade and aren't home compostable. Even fully biodegradable stuff doesn't break down well in landfill as there isn't the right ecosystem for it.”

Sam Swainbank

Appendix 4 – Video 1

‘Plastic Baggage’



Appendix 5 – Video 2

‘Scattered Reality’



Appendix 6 – Post Installation Questionnaire & Audience Feedback

Having watched my work ‘Open Your Eyes’, I ask you to take a moment or two to fill out this questionnaire. It consists of questions which will help me gather information to carry out further research.

Please circle the number that you feel is most accurate to you.

1. On a scale of 0 to 10...

How informed were you (before seeing the installation) of the current plastic crisis?

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Completely
Unaware**

**Fully
Aware**

2. Do you agree that plastic pollution is caused by human ignorance?

Yes Unsure No

3. Do you recycle plastic when you can?

Yes No

4. Have you witnessed people littering/dumping plastic in public places?

Yes No

5. (Only answer if you answered **Yes** to the previous question) How did it make you feel?

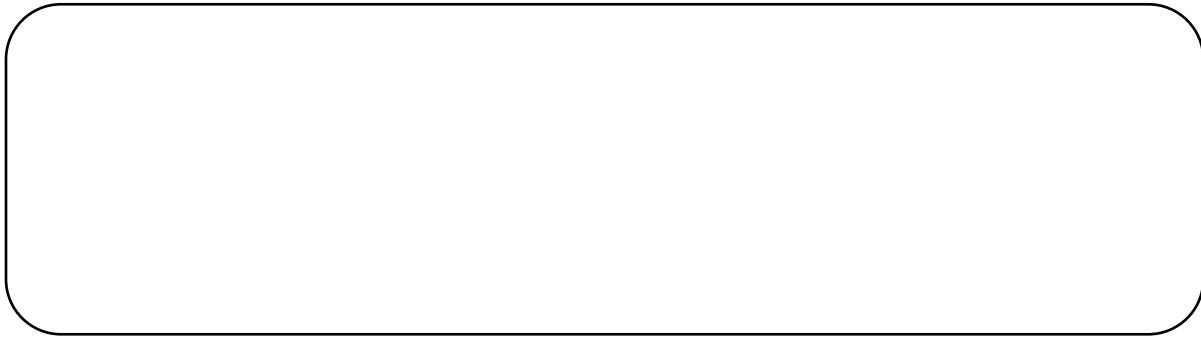
6. Do you think that (having seen my work) you'll be more inclined to make more careful choices in relation to your plastic waste?

Yes Unsure No

7. Did the work make you feel uncomfortable/feel a sense of guilt in any way?

Yes unsure No

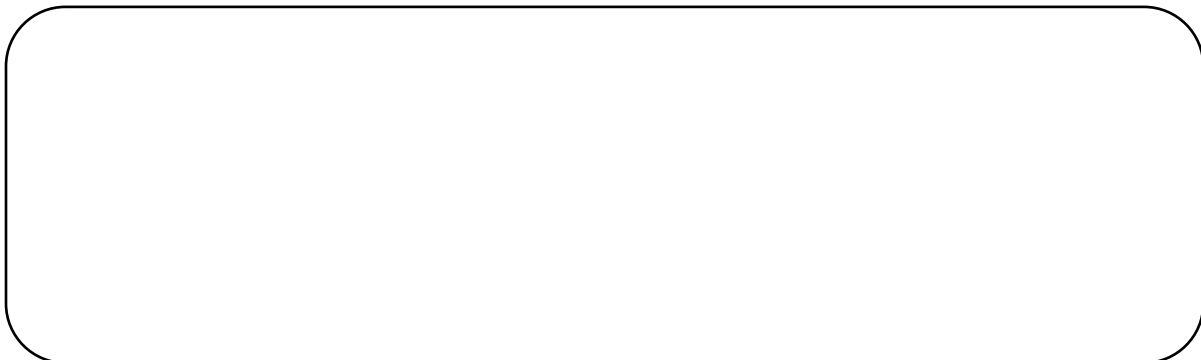
8. Please explain your answer to the previous question.



9. Do you think that we, as humans, need to start making changes now?

Yes Unsure No

10. Any other thoughts/feelings/comments/questions? Please write as much as you'd like below...

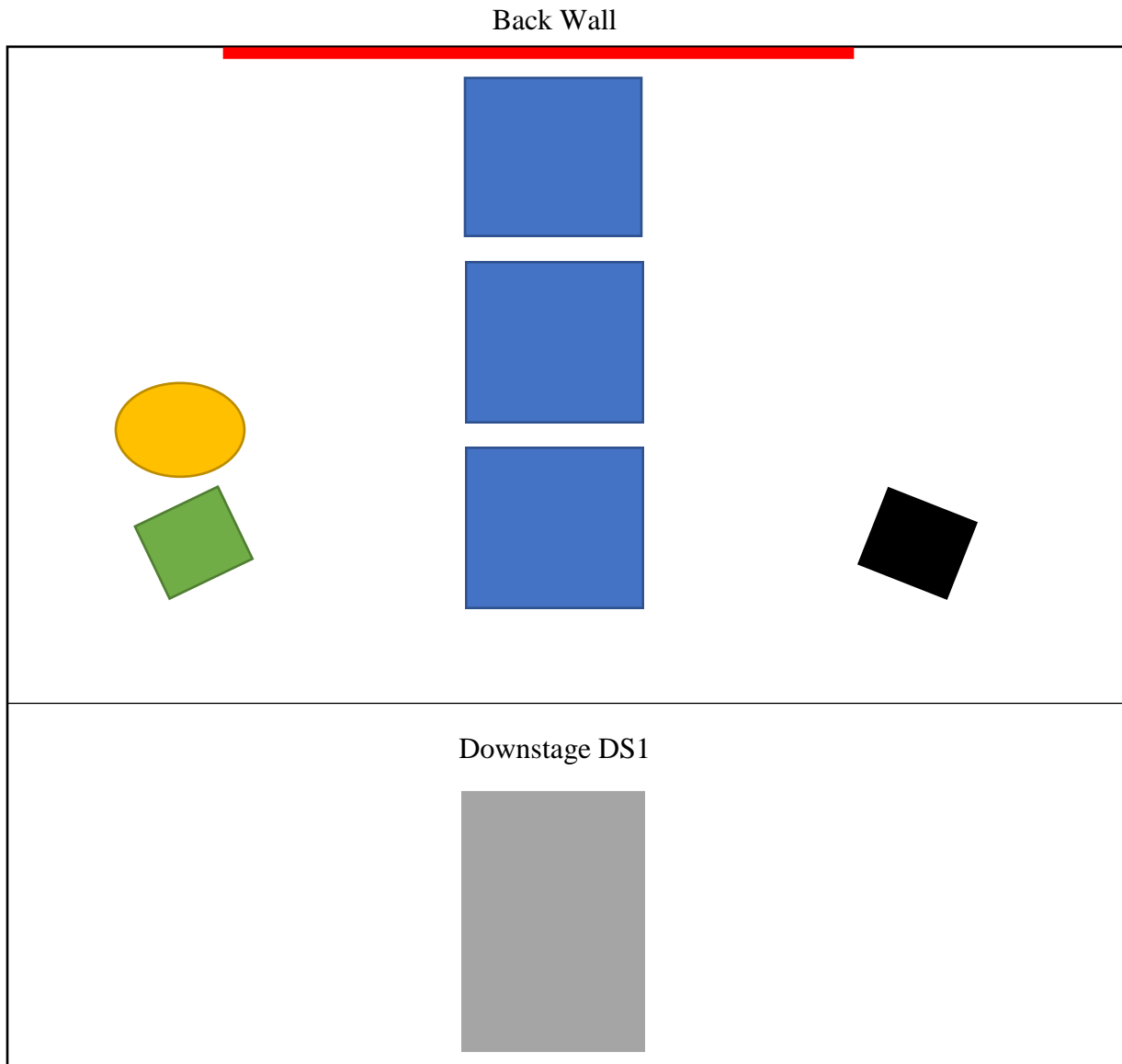


Audience Feedback

Comments that the audience members left, in response to the question “Do you think we, as humans, need to start making changes now?” and “any other comments”:

- As humans we are destroying the planet. We could do more.
- I think changes should've been made many years ago, but that most people don't want to/have difficulty sacrificing ease/comfort and don't see long term.
- Hearing stats is more impactful as it's evidence of the damage. After hearing them I feel it will repeat in my mind.
- It makes me feel overwhelmed. How can we move past this? What can we do? I feel hopeless and like we're too far gone now. I feel uncomfortable that as humans we can live like this.
- I've realised that any little effort counts, and we need more of that uncomfortable feeling to make us open our eyes.
- I think we could all be doing more to prevent plastic waste and pollution. However, I also believe much of the responsibility falls on the government.
- I never knew how big the problem was. I knew it was big, but not that big.
- As much as I do recycle and am conscious of the crisis, I cannot afford to make the choice to avoid every single-use plastic product.
- Made me reflect on my own plastic usage.
- It's very sad sometimes, however, these arguments can seem so large and obstructed from everyday life – Too big to fix. What can we do to encourage responsible behaviour on a personal and individual level?

Appendix 7 – Stage Plan



Wall – Two videos will be projected on the back wall – One at the beginning of the work and one at the end

Light Boxes – Will appear twice during the work (size *approximately 2 by 2 meters per square*)

Bin

Recycling Bin

Hanging Bottles – I have attached 30 bottles to fishing wire and would like to have them hanging off the rigging throughout the whole installation, levitating above the recycling bin

Corridor on entrance - Covered with plastic sheets

Appendix 8 – Ethics Approval Form

Application for Ethical Approval. Granted by Abigail Mortimer on 18/06/2021 at University of Chichester.

Section A : Basic Information

A1: Title of study:	How art and choreographic objects can be used as a catalyst for environmental change: Specifically, in relation to the plastic pollution crisis.		
A2: Name of Applicant:	Bonnie Simons		
A3: Position of Applicant (e.g. UG/Masters/PGR student, academic)	Masters		
A4: Program of study: (for UG or taught Masters students only)	Masters' in Performance		
A5: Department of Applicant:	Dance		
A6: Checklist to ensure application is complete. Have you prepared the following documents to accompany your application for ethical approval, please tick the appropriate column for each of the following.			
Document	Yes	No	N/A
Confirmation of Ethical Approval of any other organisation (e.g. NHS, MoD, National Offender Management Service)			x
Recruitment information / advertisement (e.g. draft text for email/ poster/social media/letter)			x
Information sheet for participants	x		
Information sheet for carers/guardians			x
Information sheet/letter for gatekeepers e.g. Head teacher, teacher, coach			x
Consent form for participants	x		
Assent form for younger children			x
Documentation relating to the permission of third parties other than the participant, guardian, carer or gatekeeper (e.g. external body whose permission is required)			x
Medical questionnaire / Health screening questionnaire			x
Secondary information sheet for projects involving intentional deceit/withholding information			x
Secondary consent form for projects involving intentional deceit/withholding information			x
Debrief sheet to give to participants after they have participated	x		

Statements about completeness of the application	Yes	No	N/A
For research involving under 18s or vulnerable groups, where necessary, a statement has been included on all information sheets that the investigators have passed appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service checks			x
I can confirm that the relevant documents listed above make use of document references including date and version number	x		
I can confirm that I have proof read my application for ethical approval and associated documents to minimise typographical and grammatical errors	x		

Declaration of the applicant:

I confirm my responsibility to deliver the research project in accordance with the University of Chichester's policies and procedures, which include the University's 'Financial Regulations', 'Research Ethics Policy', 'Electronic Information Security Policy' and 'Privacy Standard' and, where externally funded, with the terms and conditions of the research funder.

In signing this research ethics application form I am also confirming that:

- The research study must not begin until ethical approval has been granted.
- The form is accurate to the best of my knowledge and belief.
- There is no potential material interest that may, or may appear to, impair the independence and objectivity of researchers conducting this project.
- Subject to the research being approved, I undertake to adhere to the project protocol without deviation (unless by specific and prior agreement) and to comply with any conditions set out in the letter from the University ethics reviewers notifying me of this.
- I undertake to inform the ethics reviewers of significant changes to the protocol (by contacting the clerk to the Research Ethics Committee (research@chi.ac.uk) in the first instance).
- I understand that the project, including research records and data, may be subject to inspection for audit purposes, if required in future, in keeping with the University's Privacy Standard.
- I understand that personal data about me as a researcher in this form will be held by those involved in the ethics review procedure (e.g. the Research Ethics Committee and its officers and/or ethics reviewers) for five years after approval and that this will be managed according to Data Protection Act principles.
- I understand that all conditions apply to any co-applicants and researchers involved in the study, and that it is my responsibility to ensure that they abide by them.
- For the Student Investigator: I understand my responsibilities to work within a set of safety, ethical and other guidelines as agreed in advance with my supervisor and understand that I must comply with the University's regulations and any other applicable code of ethics at all times.

Title of study: How art and choreographic objects can be used as a catalyst for environmental change: Specifically, in relation to the plastic pollution crisis.

Name of applicant: Bonnie Simons

Signature of Applicant: B A SIMONS

Date: 18/06.2021

Section B: Authoriser assessment and approval

Where Applicants are students (undergraduate or postgraduate) supervisors should authorise this form; where applicants are staff members their line manager (or nominated signatory) should authorise this form.

B1: Name of Authoriser:	Abi Mortimer
B2: Position of Authoriser: (e.g. supervisor, line manager)	Supervisor
AUTHORISER: Please categorise the application (A, A+ or B) ensure that the application form and all of the required documentation are complete before signing this application. Authoriser assessment: (tick as appropriate – see Section 10 of the Research Ethics Policy)	
<p style="text-align: right;">Category A: Proceed with the research project.</p> <p><i>Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Masters applications:</i> Form and documentation retained at Department level. <i>Research Masters, PhD and staff applications:</i> Form and documentation forwarded to the Research Office research@chi.ac.uk</p>	x
<p style="text-align: right;">Category A+: (for studies where information is withheld/there is an element of deceit or similar see Appendix 13) Proceed with the research project.</p> <p><i>Undergraduate and Postgraduate Taught Masters applications:</i> Form and documentation retained at Department level. <i>Research Masters, PhD and staff applications:</i> Form and documentation forwarded to the Research Office research@chi.ac.uk</p>	
<p style="text-align: right;">Category B: Submit to the Ethical Approval Sub-group for consideration. research@chi.ac.uk</p> <p>Proceed only when approval granted by the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee</p>	
<p>Authoriser, please provide a comment on your assessment of the research project and for those projects involving vulnerable groups that you are authorising as Category A please justify this classification in the box below. As a further point, do make appropriate reference to any other codes of practice in your discipline particularly if you think that the proposed research may be in tension with those codes.</p> <p>For Category A+: the application would be approved by the line manager/supervisor (as with Category A applications) and also by an independent scrutiniser drawn from a pool of experienced researchers within the Institute/Department approved by its Head/Director</p>	
<p><i>Comment:</i></p>	

Authoriser's declaration:

- I have read the Research Ethics Policy and this has informed my judgement as to the category of assessment of this application.
- I understand that the applicant has taken account of the Research Ethics Policy and other relevant University policies in preparing this application.

- For Supervisors: I understand my responsibilities as supervisor, and will ensure, to the best of my abilities, that the student investigator abides by the University's Research Ethics Policy at all times.

Authoriser, please complete this table making it clear which version of the application form you are approving:

Version of the form (e.g. original version/ amended version following REC sub-group comments)	Signature of authoriser	Date
Original	A.Mortimer	18/06/21

For Category A+ independent scrutiniser must also sign as authoriser.

For RO use: IF CATEGORY B: Signature of the Chair of the Research Ethics Committee.

Signature: Date:

Please note that the Research Office will retain all applications for ethical approval for 5 years after the research project has ended as stated in the University's Privacy Standard

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