

## *Preserved Plastic*

### **Natalie Teasdale**

Starting this year, my preference was for a tonal aesthetic. I enjoy working with charcoal and pastel because the media allows for addition and subtraction drawing processes. Jo Bradney's 'Carbon Footprints', a series of observation drawings of food and packaging waste, was an early influence which impacted my conceptualization. Bradney's dark tonality and limited colour accents communicate an ominous mood. In my drawings of a plastic shopping bag and crushed plastic bottle, these stylistic characteristics successfully linked my subject and concept.

I have been active member of the South Australian Youth Environment Council since 2019 and am passionate about environmental sustainability. Studying Visual Art provided opportunities to pursue this interest. Early on, I narrowed my conceptual focus to the impact of plastic pollution on oceans. In Folio, I created practical works which challenged my preference for tonal drawing media. Tan Zi Xi's 'An Effort Most Futile' provided an alternative approach to communicating the enormity of plastic pollution. In contrast to Jo Bradney's tonal aesthetic, Tan Zi Xi conveys her concern for the environment using 'wry and playful humour' in cartoonish illustrations in which plastic bags, cans and bottles are simplified and layered. Her work caused me to contemplate options that would best engage my audience: a crowded composition of plastic waste, a series of small paintings of plastic waste or an observation drawing or painting of one item?

Marcello Barenghi's realist drawings of a Coca Cola bottle influenced my decision to pursue a realist aesthetic and to consider Coca Cola as a potential subject. Coca-Cola is the largest plastic producer in the world and their bottles pollute every single world habitat. While Coca Cola is a COP 27 sponsor, they have made no financial commitment to the burden their plastic waste places on the environment. My decision to choose a Coles brand plastic bottle was made for two reasons. Firstly, Coles recycles approximately 60% of all its plastic waste. Secondly, this one litre bottle of sparkling water retails for \$1.50, making it a popular seller.

Artist and climate activist Gavin Turk's paintings of crushed water bottles challenge viewers to consider the established trend to purchase water from clear plastic bottles. *"The demand in the ironic symbolic purity of water is causing our oceans to be filled with microplastics. PET plastic is highly recyclable, yet big companies believe that consumers would not buy a slightly murky or imperfect bottle."* In my Folio painting of a crushed plastic water bottle, I successfully recorded tonal and colour contrasts, surprising myself with the realism achieved and extending my aesthetic past tonality.

Painting in oils was an aesthetic decision which assisted me to successfully achieve my artistic intention. I also made the connection between my medium and concept as oil is used in the production of oil paint and plastic. By magnifying the size of cheap plastic bottle and recording the intricate tonal contrasts and light reflections, I want my audience to be intrigued by this image and consider their responsibility as consumers and recyclers.