

Jerry Barrish

Scales of Justice, 1999-2020

Assemblage found materials

72 x 40 x 18 inches

Climate Change Denier, 2021

Assemblage found materials

53 x 17.5 x 19 inches

Green Crane, 2007

Assemblage found materials

33 x 28 x 29 inches

Morning Bird, 1990

Assemblage found materials

20 x 25 x 9 inches

Ancient Bird, 2013

Assemblage found materials

34 x 32 x 21 inches

Everywhere You Go... I Will Follow You, 2022

Found material assemblage

27 x 14 x 24 inches

Spying Liberty, 2008

Assemblage found materials

47.5 x 39 x 20 inches

I started my studies at San Francisco Art Institute in sculpture but soon switched to filmmaking. After finishing my BFA & MFA, I spent 12 years making independent narrative films that I wrote and directed. In 1988 while editing my final feature, I started picking up plastic trash on the beach by my home in Pacifica. Things are different now with community cleanups and public awareness, but then the beaches were covered with all kinds of trash. I began seeing images in plastic objects, and that was the beginning of my artistic journey using what most people would consider garbage.

My work is archeological in that this work could not have been made 50 years ago because the plastics did not exist, and hopefully, they will not be around 50 years from now. California's history of art, especially in the 40's and 50's, is rich with artists working with found objects, but interestingly, no one used plastic.

When people ask what kind of art I make, I always explain that it is narrative, and I'm a storyteller. This was also true with my filmmaking. Curators used to ask me to be in Earth Day or environmental-themed shows but were only interested in the materials I used, so I did not participate. Plastic is as precious to me as stone or metal would be to other sculptors. I collect it constantly and continue to be inspired to use it to create my artwork, which is really all about storytelling.

I have known Hanna Regev for over 15 years, and I trust her curatorial expertise. When she invited me to participate in this show, I accepted because I know that she respects my art and she understands my work.

Irene Carvajal

***Dominus et Servus*, 2022**

Slave Labor Series

Digital print on back light film

8.75" x 12.5"

***Styrax Appetitus*, 2022**

Slave Labor Series

Digital print on back light film

8.75" x 12.5"

***Homo Zophobas Morio*, 2022**

Slave Labor Series

Digital print on back light film

8.75" x 12.5"

In typical privileged-human, top of the pyramid fashion, we turn to other living creatures to clean up our mess. Let others do the dirty work while we continue to enjoy the convenience plastics bring to our modern lives. I set out to use (and possibly abuse) the labor of meal worms and their appetite for styrofoam. Could I also control where they eat? In essence, making them do my work? I created groves in the styrofoam, and filled them with shaved carrots to force the worms to eat in particular patterns (they can extract nutrients from the styrofoam but they need moisture and they love carrots). But the worms have other plans, they crawl all over the carrots, spread out the bait, and create their own patterns.

The work is a collaboration, a relinquishing of control. The worms are in charge and I'm keeping them alive. Can the simple mealworm be the answer? No, not really. It can help but the problem is so huge, mealworms cannot do the work alone. Nor should they, we need to be the answer.

DeWiit Cheng

***Scooter, Collins Street, San Francisco*, 9/2/21 (#1229)**

Photo on metallic paper mounted on styrene

12"x18"

***Draped School Building with Mural #1, Ortega Street, San Francisco*, 11/24/21 (#9824)**

Photo on metallic paper mounted on styrene

12"x18"

***Draped School Building with Mural #2, Ortega Street, San Francisco*, 11/24/21 (#9823)**

Photo on metallic paper mounted on styrene

12"x18"

***Wrapped Tree, Wawona Street, San Francisco*, 01/31/22**

(#0606)

Photo on metallic paper mounted on styrene

12"x18"

“I never before saw a plant so full of life, so perfectly spiritual. It seemed pure enough for the throne of its Creator. I felt as if I were in the presence of superior beings who loved me and beckoned me to come. I sat down beside them and wept for joy. Could angels in their better land show us a more beautiful plant?” — John Muir

"Stare. It is the way to educate your eye, and more. Stare, pry, listen, eavesdrop. Die knowing something. You are not here long." — Walker Evans¹

In March 2011, I reviewed an exhibition on the life and work of the northern California naturalist John Muir: "A tireless champion for a wilderness that he believed to be divinely created, spiritually redemptive, and worthy of protection from Gilded Age laissez-faire industrial expansion, Muir saw getting back to the land at least occasionally as a balm for "thousands of tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people" — a judgment shared by contemporary visitors to the Yosemite and Sequoia National Parks seeking their own "mountain baptism."

While I was a longtime San Francisco resident, an art critic, and curator, am anything but a rugged outdoorsman in the Muir mold, and largely confine my jaunts to urban and suburban fastnesses, I have found myself more and more interested in photography during the past decade or so. While I bought my first digital camera — a 4MP Canon A530 — in order to make visual notes for reviewing gallery and museum shows, I found that I was seeing the everyday world more and more through eyes trained by art studies. Scenes reminiscent of Romantic landscape paintings, architectural photography, and mixed-media modernist abstractions seemed to appear with increasing regularity. Nowadays, I walk nearly every day, partly from visual curiosity, and partly for exercise, or cheap therapy: the 'walking cure' title is a joke version of Freud's talking cure, which I recycled for a piece on the great photographer, Walker Evans. I shoot several hundred shots a week, many of which I post on Facebook (after editing and

some minimal tweaking). Everyone loves San Francisco, and I am happy to share my interpretations of its scenic splendors as well as its absurd or gritty side, especially these days, as the city is changing so radically: ‘refreshing’ and reinventing itself as the Digital Oz.

The four photos presented in *A World Free of Plastic Imagined* depict the urban landscape in flux. The ubiquitous plastic wrap used to protect our architecture and artifacts from time and the elements will eventually age and disappear—though not as quickly, perhaps, as we’d like, given our environmental concerns. (Ecologically neutral substitutes will be found, although, as with electric cars replacing gasoline cars, the change will be gradual, and probably have side effects we do not yet envision: cars reduced animal waste on the streets, but polluted our air for over a century.) These photos of plastic-wrapped buildings, vehicles, and holiday decorations reveal a strange beauty in their folds and pleats, and partial effacement of the objects contained within. Aldous Huxley in his study of altered consciousness, *The Doors of Perception*, praised the folds of drapery, so accurately observed and rendered by Renaissance painters, as embodiments of pure *Istigkeit*, or Is-ness: “For the artist as for the mescaline taker, draperies are living hieroglyphs that stand in some peculiarly expressive way for the unfathomable mystery of pure being.” Wallace Shawn opines, in Louis Malle’s philosophical comedy, *My Dinner With André*, that if you really knew what was in a hardware store it would blow your mind.

Antonio Cortez

Breaking the Plastic Wave, 2022

Data visualizations of ocean plastic pollution sources and advice from the Pew Charitable Trusts Report to reduce 80% plastic pollution by 2040.

MOV format 5'32".

In recent years, an increasing number of studies and reports have advanced the global understanding of the challenge posed by ocean plastic pollution.

The Pew Charitable Trusts partnered with SYSTEMIQ to build on previous research and create this first-of-its-kind model of the global plastics system, proposing an attractive pathway to greatly reduce plastic pollution entering our ocean.

If the world were to apply and robustly invest in all the technologies, management practices, and policy approaches currently available — including reduction, recycling, and plastic substitution —in 20 years there would be about an 80 percent reduction from the current trajectory in the flow of plastic into the ocean.

Tess Felix

Courtney, 2022

Standing series

Plastic beach debris on painted wood panel

72" x 24"

Milan, 2018

Standing series

Plastic beach debris on painted wood panel

72" x 24"

Tess Felix creates portraits from plastic debris and strives to show a human soul. These figures are a playful response to a serious issue- the perilous state of the ocean and our marine life. While she admires activists and leaders who address the problem, her own voice is that of an artist. The contrast between the humanity of the figures and the plastic materials they are made of suggests that we are part of and responsible for the problem we have created.

Felix uses waste materials, primarily plastic debris, that wash up on Stinson Beach to create mosaic portraits of people. Often these items are curious remnants of our daily life, like parts of cell phones, discarded plugs, dental picks, bottle caps, fishing gear, old batteries, hairbrushes, and the surprisingly frequent plastic tubes and nets from oyster farming.

Her larger works include thousands of such pieces of plastic marine debris, layered and pasted to the canvas with silicone

glue. She never paints any of the plastic bits and pieces she finds, but leaves them in their “natural” state. She created her early series, “An Ocean In Crisis,” after a Winter storm left so much plastic debris on the beach.

Her recent series, “Ocean Eco Heroes,” celebrates people who are champions of the environment. Even though they are encased in beach trash, a serious purpose still shines through their eyes.

Her intention is to explore serious issues with imagination and humor and to spark curiosity, conversation, and awareness in the viewer.

Michal Gavish

***Entanglement*, 2022**

Acrylic on Fabric

3 panels, 7'H x 5'W x 2.5" each

Michal Gavish is a multimedia artist and former research scientist based in New York City. Her fascination with science goes back to her research work, observing the beauty of the microscopic world that is hidden from the naked eye. For her, plastics are not just materials to use and discard—they are long-chain molecules made of thousands of identical, repeating units that twist and entangle at the nanoscale.

Captivated by these knotted polymeric systems, she follows their intricate entanglements. With her PhD thesis in polymer chemistry, she is aware of the ongoing scientific search to generate chemical and biological mechanisms for their degradation.

Gavish interprets the global extension of the long-repeated structures in her soft installations. She develops her 3D works by using acrylic paint that she mixes in her own original chemical combinations. The resulting large format gives an abstracted view that begins in an angular view of the clean world in the background layer. The translucent fabrics on top, add to the image layers describing the entangled plastic formations as they expand globally. The plastic coverage imagery partially blocks the view of the background layer. The

map is based on current scientific models * and extends into the future and into the potential of an imaginary solution of the communal scientific effort for peeling these layers off the world.

References:

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0111913>

<https://iopscience.iop.org/article/10.1088/1748-9326/10/12/124006>

Tanya Knoop

***Shame*, 2022**

Inkjet print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl
24" x 35.75"

***The Legacy of Adam and Eve*, 2022**

Inkjet print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl
24" x 35.75"

***All In This Together*, 2022**

Inkjet print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl
24" x 35.75"

***The Truth About Plastic*, 2022**

Inkjet print on Hahnemühle FineArt Pearl
19.5" x24"

This series shows conceptually what happens to single-use plastics that pass through our lives. Maybe the most common experience is that we buy something packaged in plastic. We throw that plastic in the recycle bin and either we don't give it another thought or maybe we think it will be recycled into something useful and will not have a negative impact on the environment. The truth is that only about 5-6% of those plastics are actually recycled. Much of it turns up in the ocean where it breaks down into microplastics that last for at least hundreds of years and which are already being found in the organs and tissues of many living creatures on earth, including humans. Pollution in the ocean compromises ocean

health, causes harm to sea animals, and contributes to global climate change.

Normally, I am motivated by the beauty of nature or creatures when I make art, but this exhibit is different. There's nothing pretty about this work. There is nothing pretty about the subject, though we have glamourized plastic since its inception. My motivation for this series is to help raise awareness about the plastic pollution problem threatening the health of the planet and all living things.

Liz Mamorsky

Analog Artbots

***Techie Green*, 2009**

Reclaimed materials

53" x 18" x 5"

***Bootfoot Camo Waders*, 2014**

Reclaimed materials

55" x 20" x 2"

***Tout Uncommon*, 2015**

Reclaimed materials

67" x 18" x 4"

My Analog Artbots are culled from the detritus of technology, a never-ending stream of e-waste. The speed of technological redundancy is astounding. No sooner is a new product created than it is rendered obsolete. I am the recipient of a small portion of that obsolescence. Living and working in San Francisco, CA, I have access to Silicon Valley and reclaimed electronics of all ilk.

Large motherboards from the Cobb Mountain and Geysers power plants in northern California, emblazoned with gaudy resistors and capacitors, flesh out and clothe these wall-hung Bots constructed on wooden armatures. I also find PC boards and keyboards in scrap yards and dismantle computers and other machines to retrieve a vast array of electronic gew-gaws. Hard drives, especially the old ones, have

marvelous innards: copper coil step-motors, stroboscopic timing wheels, platters, and their separators. New drives are more compact but still contain jewel-like mini-parts. Cell phones too, house beautiful components.

I cannot make sense of waste but I can make art of it, and am driven to do so. I like to think that my Anthropomorphic Analog Artbots are helping to make the world just a little bit cleaner...and certainly, a lot more fun!

Dianne Platner

***The Shroud*, 2022**

Woven Wires, Cords, Cables

72" x 32"

***Discredit*, 2021**

Expired credit cards, acrylic grid

37" x 46" x 1.5"

On loan from the collection of Louise Sampson

Dianne Platner is an artist, activist, and magician who transforms mundane materials into complex images that speak to change. Known for her powerful site-specific installations and the use of plastic as a medium, she positions her art as social commentary.

Platner's approach comes from the viewpoint that the planet is in a precarious stasis that threatens the world. Driven by environmental, economic, and social issues, she applies a palette of everyday materials that draws attention to the altered medium and a provocative message.

The artist goes beyond the conventional reuse of materials. Her recent work using plastic, demands that viewers take a second look to comprehend what's in front of them. The experiential value far exceeds that of the original concept and materials.

Whether the artist uses plastic to highlight the scale of consumerism, or to slow the fastest growing waste stream, her work is a welcome contribution to the environmental movement. The medium and message make clear that art as intervention matters and that we can play a significant role in repairing the damaged planet.

Ruth Tabancay

Bleached, 2022

Crochet, assemblage. Yarn, needle caps, needle sheaths, vial caps, tubing caps, oxygen tubing, nasal prong tubing, polystyrene, pins.

36" x 40" x 6"

Bleached concerns the bleaching of the coral reefs due to global warming, one of the main causes of which is the burning of petroleum-based fuels which, among other applications, are also used in the manufacture of plastics. An increase in ocean temperature, as little as 2° Fahrenheit, can be deadly for coral reef systems. Corals form a mutualistic relationship with the algae zooxanthellae. Warmer temperatures cause them to expel the algae and, if sustained, eventually kill the corals. Instead of stunning colors, a skeleton is left behind. Coral bleaching events have been recorded in Australia since the late 1990's with a sixth mass bleaching event occurring in March 2022. One-quarter of the world's marine life depends on coral reefs at some time in their life cycle. The reefs protect shorelines from storms and erosion and provide food and jobs for coastal communities.

For *Bleached*, stylized coral reef structures are interspersed with plastic medical waste that has passed through my hands over the past nine years. As a former medical professional and more recently as someone with a chronic medical disease, I have witnessed first-hand the large amount of plastic waste that is generated in caring for patients. I have been saving all kinds of plastic medical waste- needle caps,

needle sheaths, vial caps, tubing caps, oxygen tubing, nasal prong tubing- that have passed through my hands knowing these items would find their way into my artwork about the environment. I abhor plastic waste and work hard to eliminate it as much as possible in my life but these plastics that are generated have been essential in maintaining my health. The knowledge that plastics like these contribute to global warming and therefore destruction of the coral reefs creates a conflict with my belief system.

The crochet structures I use are in the form of the hyperbolic plane, a non-Euclidean geometry seen in nature by lettuces, cacti, sea slugs, corals, and possibly the structure of the universe. I have interspersed these with imaginary depictions of coral reef life envisioned in plastic.

Ruth Tabancay

Adapting to New Substrates 2.1, 2021.

Hand embroidery. Polystyrene, plastic bags, plastic cups, bubble wrap, face masks, vegetable tags, straw, takeout food container

32" x 42" x 2"

Adapting to New Substrates 3.0, 2022.

Hand embroidery. Polystyrene, plastic bags, plastic cups, bubble wrap, face masks, vegetable tags, straw, takeout food container

26" x 33" x 3"

My work illustrates my hope that living forms will evolve to digest plastic. As a former bacteriology major, I have long had images of microorganisms embedded into my subconscious. In daily life, the continuous flow of plastic through my home made it hard for me to ignore it as an art material.

The intersection of these two ideas has resulted in my embroidery on various plastics—polystyrene, plastic bags, bubble, plastic cups, face masks, vegetable tags, straws, and takeout food containers — with forms resembling bacteria, fungi, and larvae or maggots.

One of our planet's major problems is the accumulation of petroleum-based plastics in our environment. Since 1950's, more than 8 billion tons of plastic have been produced. As its production far exceeds any means of eliminating it, it becomes a problem for the natural world. Even though communities all over offer recycling for various plastics, only

#1 PET (polyethylene terephthalate) and #2 HDPE (high-density polyethylene) are recyclable.

Researchers worldwide are working to cultivate bacteria whose enzymes break down plastics. In 2015, as reported in *Environmental Science and Technology*, researchers in China found that mealworms had the ability to chew and eat Styrofoam. In *Science*, 2016, researchers working in Japan found a new species of bacteria that break down PET into environmentally benign monomers. In April 2022, *Nature* published that researchers at the University of Texas have found an enzyme variant that can break down plastic in hours to days, rather than years. There is hope that these organisms may soon be available on the global scale needed to manage the ever-increasing amounts of plastic pollution.