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Wednesday, 2 October 2019

Art meets science to unveil impact of plastic pollution

The growing problem of plastic pollution in the world's oceans is the focus of an environmental educational program happening in the North-West this week.

Vanishing Point: Unseen is an arts-meets-science collaboration presented by the University of Tasmania as part of this year's Burnie Shines festival.

It will commence with the opening of a visually-stunning exhibition at Makers' Workshop (**tomorrow, Thursday, 3 October**), showcasing the work of Tasmanian artists and scientists.

Vanishing Point coordinator and artist Katherine Cooper said the collaborative group hoped to encourage conversations about the serious global issue.

"From microbeads in personal care products, microfibres in synthetic clothing, and fragments derived from the breakdown of larger debris, microplastics are increasingly invading our marine systems and food chains," Ms Cooper said.

"The works in this exhibition emerge from an inquiry-based pursuit that is common to both art and science, presenting a commentary on the multifaceted nature of both scientific research and artistic expression.

"It's possible to engage viewers through visual beauty and simplicity, leading them through a deeper story to raise awareness of the issue at hand – the dangers of plastic in our marine environment.

"We can all make a difference if we are mindful, and small changes to our behaviours can have a positive impact."

The exhibition will also feature artists Sophie Carnell, Diane Masters, Gerhard Mauz, Toby Muir-Wilson, Peter Walsh, and Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies (IMAS) scientists Dr Patti Virtue, Dr Heidi Auman and Dr Frederique Olivier.

Their exhibits include jewellery made from ocean debris, plastic rubbish and fishing line, as well as etchings, watercolours, sculptures, prints and drawings.

Cradle Coast campus Arts and Public Programs Coordinator Joanna Gair invited *Vanishing Point: Unseen* to exhibit in Burnie after hearing about the important discussions the work was generating, both in the gallery and online.

"This is an important and timely exhibition for us as island dwellers, and as part of a national conversation. I couldn't think of a better exhibition to present for Burnie Shines, and the presentation has become a special part of Makers' Workshop's 10th Anniversary celebrations," Ms Gair said.

"The work is of exceptional quality, which is what you would expect from the high calibre of artists we have represented here, but what you might not expect is the number of levels at which the work can be appreciated.

"As well as being a collection of sublimely beautiful artworks, this is a true art-meets-science research project which seamlessly stimulates debate and raises awareness about the important issue of marine waste."

Stemming from the exhibition is an all-ages [Vanishing Point Community Forum \(Saturday, 5 October\)](#) where expert panellists will share insight into how marine plastic debris is impacting local wildlife, and practical solutions to address the problem.

For younger members of the community, Dr Heidi Auman will read her celebrated book *Garbage Guts* at Burnie Library (Thursday, 3 October, 2.30pm) and Devonport Library (Friday, 4 October, 2.30pm).

"I particularly love that there's a program of community learning events to complement and support the aims of the exhibition," Ms Gair said.

MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES:

Vanishing Point Exhibition Opening
Thursday, 3 October, 5–7pm
Makers' Workshop, 2–4 Bass Highway, Burnie

The event will include a community celebration of the 10th anniversary of Makers' Workshop and the volunteer programs on site.

Vanishing Point Community Forum
Saturday, 5 October, 11.30am–1pm
Makers' Workshop, 2–4 Bass Highway, Burnie

Visitors can discover what microplastics are found inside marine wildlife, and participate in a Q&A discussion.

The panellists are:

- Dr Patti Virtue – Institute for Marine & Antarctic Studies (convenor)
- Anna Wind – Natural Resource Management, Cradle Coast
- Dr Heidi Auman – Institute for Marine & Antarctic Studies
- Rowan Sharman – CCC Waste Management Group

- Peter Walsh – Institute for Marine & Antarctic Studies
- Bianca Dunham – crew member for Sea Shepherd and young eco-entrepreneur.

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