

SecondLife Teacher Notes



Second Life is an exhibition which looks at sustainable art practice. The contemporary New Zealand artists on show create art with found materials – giving them a "Second Life". The works are challenging and inspiring in a time when sustainability is such a hot topic.



What is Sustainability?

Sustainability is the ability to maintain balance in a state or system. So in an environmental context sustainability is the ability for humans to maintain balance on the earth by not using resources so quickly that the earth can not replenish them. Humans must balance their consumption of the earth's resources in order to ensure that they can be replaced naturally.

The principles of sustainability are...

- Reduce dependence upon fossil fuels underground metals, and minerals
- Reduce dependence upon synthetic chemicals and other unnatural substances
- Reduce encroachment upon nature
- Meet human needs fairly & efficiently

A very simple example of maintaining the earth's balance is the use of trees for wood and paper products. If we were to cut down all the trees to make paper very quickly, without replacing them, this would be unsustainable. This is because the trees can not grow back quickly enough for humans to continue this behaviour. In this situation, replacing each tree with a seedling, recycling paper to avoid cutting down more trees, and allowing time for the trees to grow back would be sustainable. This is because even though humans are cutting down the trees, they are helping to maintain the earth's balance by replacing them and allowing them time to grow.



Some examples of natural resources

- Fossil Fuels – coal, oil
- Water – the sea, rivers
- Food - plants and animals
- Wildlife – plants and animals
- Soils
- The Air – wind, the atmosphere

An important aspect of sustainability is to consider the "Carrying Capacity" of the earth. The carrying capacity of the earth is the number of people (size of the population) that the earth can sustain. This includes the consideration of food, water and others supplies that humans need. Essentially, for us to live in a sustainable society, we must ensure that the earth can sustain our population and the resources that we use.

The consideration of future generations of people is an important value of sustainability. Sustainability will maintain the earth's environment not only for our lifetime, but for the future generations of people who have not been born yet.

There are global goals for sustainability. These are

- **Providing future generations with the same environmental potential as presently exists**
- **Managing economic growth to be less resource intensive and less polluting**
- **Integrating environmental, social and economic sectors when developing sustainability policies**
- **Maintaining and enhancing the adaptive capacity of the environmental system**
- **Preventing irreversible long-term damage to ecosystems and human health**
- **Avoiding unfair or high environmental costs on vulnerable populations**
- **Assuming responsibility for environmental effects that occur outside areas of jurisdiction**
- **People and communities investigating problems and developing new solutions**

These goals can also be used when thinking about sustainability at home, in the classroom or anywhere else. The goals for sustainability involve all people aiming to live more sustainably.





Sustainability at Home

Living sustainably at home is a major start to having a sustainable earth. The changes people can make at home are relatively simple, but have a massive effect on the rest of the earth.

Some ways to be sustainable at home

- Turn off lights and appliances when you don't need them – This will reduce power consumption.
- Recycle – By recycling our rubbish we reduce the amount of waste being put into landfills. For example, ice-cream containers can be re-used as lunchboxes, egg cartons can be re-used to plant seedlings. If you can not reuse things in the house, be sure to separate your recycling and put it out for collection.
- Say 'no' to plastic bags – Use recyclable grocery bags.
- Grow your own organic vegetables- This reduces chemicals in the environment.
- Make a compost heap – a good way to recycle AND help your veggies grow!
- Use public transport, walk or use your bike – this reduces the number of cars on the road and helps to reduce emissions. Biking and walking are also good exercise!
- Conserve water – turn the tap off when you brush your teeth, take quick showers. You can even use leftover water (from hot water bottles, the washing machine or cooking) to water the garden.

All of these things are small changes a household can make. They not only help us live sustainably but they can also save us money and be tasty making them good for us and for the environment.





Sustainability in the Classroom

A lot of ways we can be sustainable in the classroom are also things we can do at home.

- **Recycling** – Have a paper recycling bin in the classroom.
- **Re-use Paper** – Write on the back of scrap paper or cut it up into note papers.
- **Reduce Printing** – By printing double sided, or not printing at all, we can reduce the amount of paper used. Think before you print emails.
- **Use the Whiteboard** – Rather than printing off sheets, use the whiteboard to save paper.
- **Turn things off** - Turn off computers, lights and other equipment when it is not being used to reduce power emissions.
- **Make a class worm farm or veggie garden** – This is a great way to get kids involved in sustainable living. The worm farm can fit into science, and growing a veggie garden can be a great way to learn about nutrition.
- **Plant the school** – make your school beautiful by planting trees and flowers. The trees will help offset carbon emissions, as well

The Wellington Regional Council website has a great guide to starting your own worm farm –

http://www.gw.govt.nz/story_images/4492_howtowormfarm_s8932.pdf

There are also instructions on the Zero Waste Trust website –

<http://www.zerowaste.co.nz/default,499.sm>





Some useful words and terms

Green – A lot of people describe sustainability as being 'green'. People use this term because green is a colour which symbolises nature and the earth. There are different levels of 'green'.

Applied Sustainability is the use of scientific innovations and technology to meet human needs while also preserving the systems of the planet.

Sustainable Development is when resources are used to meet human needs while still preserving the environment so that these needs can be met not only in the present, but also for future generations

Up-cycling – Up-cycling is the process of taking waste materials and using them to make something new and of greater value.

Environmentalism is a broad philosophy and social movement regarding concerns for environmental conservation and improvement of the environment. Environmentalism and environmental concerns may be represented with the colour green.

Natural Capital – The sum total of the earth's resources.

Anthropocentrism is the belief that human beings are the center of everything. In environmentalism, the anthropocentric viewpoint is that it is human beings which are responsible for the damage to the earth. It can also be called humanocentrism. You may come across this word while reading about sustainability.

Anthro = people

Centric = the center, the most important

Ecocentrism is the belief that nature in general is the center of everything, not humans but it is not the opposite of anthropocentrism. Ecocentrism focuses on nature as a whole and strives to maintain ecosystem composition and ecological processes. This term is often used when looking at sustainability.

Eco – nature

Centric – the center, the most important

The Gaia Hypothesis – The Gaia hypothesis proposes that all of the earth's systems (the atmosphere, plant ecosystems, geological systems etc,) are closely linked and intertwined, meaning that the earth is one system, rather than being made up of many. Gaia is the Greek goddess of the earth, sometimes called mother earth. In Maori, we have Papatuanuku who is mother earth.

Useful Websites

www.eco-school.org

www.eco-school.org.uk

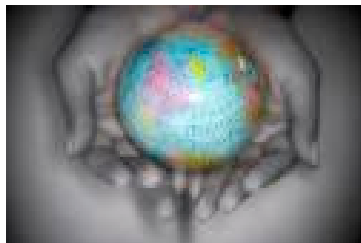
www.sustainablehouseholds.co.nz

www.sustainability.govt.nz

www.earthlimited.org

www.greenpeace.org

www.zerowaste.co.nz



Sustainability in Art

Sustainable art is produced with consideration for the impact the work will have on the environment. This can occur in many ways, from using recycled objects to ensuring that exhibitions are sustainable as a whole, for example using recycled materials, conserving energy and reducing emissions in transport.

The following artists produce works which can be considered sustainable. They use found objects which have had previous uses not even related to art, recycling them to create new art works. The artists come from a range of backgrounds and though their interests may not be primarily environmental, their art practice is sustainable.

SECONDLIFE ARTIST PROFILES

- *Eve Armstrong*

Eve Armstrong lives and works in Auckland, but was born in Upper Hutt. She graduated from Elam School of Fine Arts, University of Auckland, in 2004 and has participated in several exhibitions mainly in New Zealand. Armstrong finds inspiration in the piles of rubbish people leave discarded on the city streets. For Armstrong, these piles of rubbish are visually compelling, and she sees them as beautiful landscapes that speak of

the city itself. Using materials such as cardboard, plastic containers, plastic bags and especially packing tape, Armstrong creates layered



Eve Armstrong, *Run Off* 2007
Chartwell Collection, Auckland Art Gallery, Toi o Tamaki

collages and sculptures. She reconfigures the materials, taking them from one realm to another. This encourages the viewer to change the way they look at things. Though her work may look like a mess, it is carefully arranged.

- **Judy Darragh**

Judy Darragh is an Auckland-based artist who is currently lecturing for the Visual Arts degree at Manukau Institute of Technology and Elam School of Fine Arts in Auckland. She was born in Christchurch and completed a Diploma in Visual Communication and Design at the Wellington Polytechnic. She has exhibited widely in New Zealand and has works in collections around the country. Darragh uses found materials which have had a previous life, usually mass produced and tacky plastic materials scoured from op-shops, recycling stations and garage sales. Darragh has been labelled the "Queen of Kitsch" for her works, in which she uses pre-loved objects that are cheap, fun and familiar to people.



- **Niki Hastings-McFall**

Niki Hastings-McFall, who is of Samoan and European descent, produces art which engages directly with many of the issues most relevant to Pacific peoples living in New Zealand today, to do with hybridity, diaspora, identity politics and the maintenance and evolution of culture. Trained as a jeweller, she has more recently



created larger installation pieces and what she terms 'mixed media assemblages', works that nonetheless retain the delicacy and exquisite detailing of her jewellery. Using materials as diverse as plastic sushi fish, reflective road-sign vinyl, artificial lei and light boxes, Hastings-McFall explores what it means to be a New Zealander of Pacific Island descent living in the New Zealand urban environment in the 21st century. While using these objects, Hastings-McFall's work is environmentally minded as she promotes the use of throwaway materials which reflect her own values about sustainability and thriftiness.

- ***Joanna Langford***



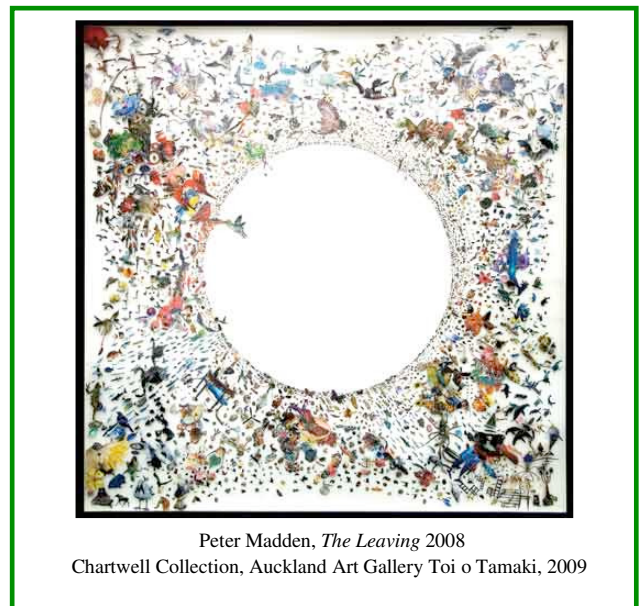
Joanna Langford, *Beyond Nowhere* 2007 - 2009

Joanna Langford was born in 1978 in Gisborne. She completed a Bachelor of Media Arts at Wintec in 1999 and in 2004 completed a Master of Fine Arts at the University of Canterbury. Her works have been made from materials such as recycled plastic shopping bags, computer keyboards, kebab sticks, hundreds and thousands biscuits and electrical lights. Her installations are usually partially made in situ and this allows for a spontaneous making process reacting to the texture, size and shape of the materials and the architecture of the space being used. These installations are large-scale and evoke miniature and magical worlds, with kebab stick structures spiralling

high out of plastic bag cloud-scapes. Langford takes her materials from recycle stations, giving them a second life, however she sometimes disassembles her own works and re-uses those materials in another space, giving her own art works a second life of their own.

- **Peter Madden**

Peter Madden was born in 1966, studied Bachelor of Visual Arts, Auckland Institute of Technology, Auckland (1992 – 95), and Masters of Fine Arts, Elam School of Fine Arts, Auckland University. For the last eight years, Madden has created a sustainable art practice from recycled materials, mostly paper. Madden creates magical 3D universes cut from books,



magazines and encyclopaedias and *National Geographic* magazine is a favourite. Madden cuts out images from the texts, then re-assembles them as fantastical constructions. Afterwards, the books are kept for possible future works. Madden transforms the magazine images taking them from the real world and transforming them into beautiful fictional works of art.





INTERESTING ARTISTS, ART MOVEMENTS and ART TERMS

Installation – An art installation is a piece of work which is specific to the site it is in. It is often created in that space, is three dimensional, and often transforms peoples perception of that particular space.

Arte Povera – An Italian art movement which began in 1967 as a deliberate reaction to American consumerism, started by Germane Celant.

Assemblage Art- The artistic process in which a three dimensional piece is created by putting together different found objects.

Pop Art- An art movement which emerged in the 1950's. Pop art challenged the values of fine art by using mass-produced images, often in repetition. The images are removed from their context and sometimes placed with new objects, and so they are given new meaning.

Collage – The technique of cutting out different forms and reassembling them to create something new. The materials can range from newspaper to ribbons to photographs, and are cut then glued on to a piece of canvas or some other material.

Decoupage - Decoupage is similar to collage in that it involves cutting images and gluing them to an existing object. Decoupage, however, uses layering to create depth, and often uses multiples of the same specific image. The piece is usually varnished over as a sealant, as decoupage is most often used in craft to decorate objects such as boxes.

Marcel Duchamp- A French artist who in 1917 famously created a piece called Fountain which consisted of an upside down urinal with the letters 'R.Mutt' written on the side. Duchamp's works used everyday found objects, usually mass-produced items, to provoke and shock people.

Picasso- Picasso, the artist most well known for his Cubist works, also created pieces using found objects. Picasso created assemblage pieces which used interesting combinations of household items.

Kurt Schwitters- A pioneering artist in the 1930's who constructed works made of junk scavenged from the streets. This was a way of democratising high art and challenging the existing value systems.

Germano Celant- The founder of the Arte Povera movement. Celant was an Italian art critic who held two exhibitions in the 1960's that promoted art that was free of convention, power-structures and the market place.



EDUCATION NOTES

CIRRICILUM LINKS

Learning Areas:

VISUAL ARTS : Understanding the Arts in context, Developing Practical Knowledge, Developing Ideas, Communicating and Interpreting.

SOCIAL SCIENCES : E.G. Level Three – Understand how people make decisions about access to and use of resources.

KEY COMPETENCIES: Managing self , relating to others, using language, symbols and texts, participating and contributing, thinking.



PRE AND POST VISIT ACTIVITIES

- **FIND** out which plastics you can recycle, check out the ID codes on plastics and make an information sheet that you can use at home.
- **COLLECT** some recycled materials and make an art work installation at your school.
- **MAKE** a list of ways you can reduce the amount of rubbish being sent to the landfill.
- **CREATE** a recycling checklist that you can place by the bins at school.
- **RESEARCH** what eco-friendly alternatives there are for packaging.
- **DESIGN** a funky rubbish bin that will encourage people to dispose their rubbish responsibly.
- **MAKE** a funky rubbish bin for your classroom or school. You could use recycled materials.
- **FIND OUT** what the word sustainability means to you and add this to the Pataka Wiki site.

