

UK, D-Cast help students learn how to mitigate plastic pollution

The workshop aimed to use art to connect with young people, raise awareness of the issue, change behaviours toward plastic pollution, and protect marine life.

Supported by the British High Commission in Honiara together with the British Council and Dreamcast Theatre Solomon Islands, students aged between 9 to 11 years, worked remotely with renowned UK artist Mandy Barker to create pieces of artwork made from everyday plastics. Their artwork will be exhibited at the Dreamcast Theatre Art Hub from Tuesday 18 October onwards.

Plastics can be detrimental to both humans and marine biodiversity once used and thrown into our waterways, streams, and river systems. While some are recyclable, others cannot, and sadly most waste on land often ends up in our oceans.

In Honiara city, single-use plastics can be seen along the drains, streets, beachfront, streams, and rivers. Whilst there have been significant waste management efforts by the Honiara City Council, more needs to be done to raise awareness of the issue and prevent plastic pollution.

This is why a group of students from schools in Honiara is coming together to create an art exhibition at Dreamcast Theatre turning plastic waste into art.

Themed “Our Ocean and Plastics”, the workshop aims to use art to connect with young people and raise awareness of the issue, changing behaviours towards plastic pollution, and protecting the marine biodiversity in the Solomon Islands.

Mandy Barker is an international award-winning photographer whose work involving marine plastic debris, over the past 12 years, has received global recognition.

Working with marine scientists Mandy’s artwork aims to raise awareness about plastic pollution in the world’s oceans, highlighting the harmful effect on marine life and ourselves.

Acting British High Commissioner to Solomon Island, Nicola Noble said:

I’m delighted the UK is working in partnership with Dreamcast Theatre to support this special program on Ocean Plastics. Over eight million tonnes of plastic are discarded into the world’s oceans each year, putting marine wildlife under serious threat.

This workshop will provide children in Honiara with a unique opportunity to work remotely with Mandy Barker to raise awareness of this important issue through creative art. I very much look

forward to seeing the children's creations at the art exhibition on Tuesday and thank everyone involved in this important work.

The workshop has been developed as a result of discussions by the British High Commission in Honiara, the British Council in New Zealand, Aotearoa, and Dreamcast Theatre Group, and is funded through the UK's Climate Diplomacy Fund.

Natasha Beckman, Director of the British Council New Zealand and the Pacific said:

British Council New Zealand and the Pacific are very excited to work together on this project with the British High Commission, Honiara, and Dreamcast Theatre Group, and school children between 9 to 11 years old in the Solomon Islands.

We need our children to be aware of the problem of plastic pollution but also to help them have creative ways of dealing with the problem. Our children are our future and equipping them with the right knowledge of plastic pollution, and its effects on marine biodiversity are vital.

Meanwhile, UK artist, Mandy Barker joined the two-day workshop virtually via Zoom and she was excited to be working with children in the Solomon Islands. She said:

It's a pleasure to be involved in such a unique opportunity and to connect across the ocean from the UK to the Solomon Islands. To be able to share my work, raise awareness, and inform young people about the plastic pollution issue, in a location that is in much need of help, is an honor. I hope it will make a difference in the community and go on to inspire change.

About 30 schoolchildren from Koloale, Coronation, Perch, Tuvarufu, and the Honiara Integrated Community Schools in Honiara took part in the workshop. They had the opportunity to listen to Mandy Barker on creating art out of plastic waste. The students used collected plastic waste materials from the beachfront in Honiara to create art pieces for display.

Their completed artwork will be on exhibition at the Dreamcast Theatre Art Hub in China Town from the afternoon of 18 October (Tuesday) onwards and will be open for public viewing for one week. A film and other informative materials will also be produced during the workshop and will be posted online for the wider world to see.