

**Nadya Hristakieva**

**Interviewing**

**Lorrain Mailer**

**26<sup>th</sup> October 2024**

**1. Why do you choose to work with certain materials?**

In a world full of visual noise, all vying for your attention, how better to open a discussion on the negativity that has resulted from our market driven society than to use its “excrement” waste. I use single used fossil fuel-based plastic in my practice. The characteristic of fossil fuel-based plastic is that it will endure for thousands of years like stone, or other manmade materials like pottery and steel. The difference with plastics is that it is generally non-recyclable, used primarily as packaging in replacement for more organic wrapping, used once and then thrown away. I feel it encapsulates and expresses today’s global attitude to values, responsibility, accountability, negativity and a loss of hope. At present only 4% of the United Kingdom’s domestic and commercial plastics put into recycling systems is recycled. The rest we either pay to be transported to other countries, who in turn must figure a way to resolve their growing mountains of plastic, or is deposited into landfill, dumped into the environment or pumped into our water systems. This is not a solution but a problem that is escalating and storing up life threatening problems for the future.

These materials are readily available and cost next to nothing to buy if you are prepared to collect and clean. Like construction, everything manufactured in plastic comes in unified sizes so can be priced and assembled in regimented order and due to its apparent complications and cost to be repurposed reflects the intransigent attitude of the markets that are driven by profit, so industries produce more and more virgin products. Each manufactured item holds the context of our society, from the last thirty years; the domination of multinational corporations that hold the sway of global power over and beyond borders and national politics, and a consumer driven capitalism which nurtures short term desire beyond need.

## **2. What is the concept of your work?**

By using repetition and duplication of any simple plastic waste product, I aim to highlight the pervasive concentration due to our market forces. I do not wish to criticize the amazing technological achievements that plastic has given society, rather the double standards that entice the exclusive and aggressive production of plastic products at the exclusion of other materials in the name of efficiency and cost. These companies reap huge profits. With a growing understanding of the detriment brought to our survival through micro-plastic particles leaking into our soil, through the skin and the digestive system of all organic matter, which includes us, to our reproduction, life expectancy and so on, it's ironic that there is no real international cooperation and legal agreement to halt the production of virgin plastics or more alarmingly internationally supported research into reappropriating the existing plastic waste into another use. The entire process of oil extraction to disposal damages the planet with production expected to double by 2050.

I believe it is a common human fault that when a breakthrough or invention is found to solve a problem, not much fore thought is given to the process of that commodity after and beyond this stage. Plastics needs a cycle that follows its entire journey from oil extraction to product and onwards into how it can safely become part of our natural and evolutionary world.

Yet mankind has had similar blind spots and arrogance in refusing to acknowledge "self-evident facts" as within belief systems, politics, education, gender or race in its desire for domination. Hence the location of my installations are equally important to the understanding of my work as a reflection on the double standards and hypocrisy of a patriarchal framework within an ever-increasing world population that needs to be homogenized to maintain control.

### **3. Does this help nature?**

Yes, it draws attention to the prevailing dilemma we face globally. It highlights the “rabbit caught in the headlights” of our present position. While society feels and agrees action needs to be taken to reduce plastic production, clean up our land, rivers and oceans, we question who takes on this responsibility, who pays for it? Is it politicians who make our laws with diplomats who liaise with other countries to construct these treaties? But this takes time unless given urgency like war or covid. Otherwise, the time will enable lobbying and funds to be donated to political parties by industrial manufacturers to influence agendas. Unfortunately, this will coexist with the convenience that plastic has brought to everyday life. There will be a huge reluctance to make sacrifices to our daily life from food packaging, clothing to utensils and in our work environments. Instead, there is a preferred desire to relinquish responsibility and remain compliant with the status quo.

My work reflects this dilemma squarely back at my audience away from the intellectual-liberal and scary gallery environment. Placed within an everyday location, it can be discovered and viewed in all its many facets by a diverse population. It does not judge but it does invite the viewer to ask questions. In that compacity, hopefully it will shift mindsets and remind people of the consequences of our habits, which we could change or modify to help nature. In addition, we can question our perceived dependance on all these plastic consumables and whether they are necessary for our wellbeing, finance and our environment.

### **4. How does your recent exhibition align with your philosophy?**

*The Beat* and *Within the Limitations* were combined while simultaneously being exhibited through Artly Mix in São Paulo in Brazil. My previous work had used thousands of compact discs which left me with the cases of compact discs (CDs) and digital versatile discs (DVDs). I was anxious to repurpose the CD cases in a constructive and purposeful way without destroying or altering the character of the

object. Its standardized properties made it a suitable component to stack and build upon a basic template, like Lego.

With resources being extracted from the creative industries it made sense to offer an open call on Instagram to invite small artworks to fit within the dimensions of a CD case to frame two-dimensional work and hide like precious jewels (the name given to virgin CD cases) the miniature sculptures within the plinth constructions. These gems of creative thought challenge the uniformly constrained and corporate authority of the CD plinths. In addition to visualizing the tension between functionality and visceral, it was also a simple and effective way to demonstrate with imagination another function for the cases.

*Within the Limitations* had its initial exhibition within the confines of a major Tesco's superstore in March 2024. You had to walk through aisles of consumer products and perishables to reach the exhibition space. It blurred the line between what was a consumer item or graphics and what was art and what was the purpose of art in this unconventional environment. The framing of the artwork within the CD cases challenged the perceived concept of what could be used for framing and if the material constituted quality art and therefore value. This led to evaluating our attitude to the production and inevitable discarding of plastics into the environment.

Put alongside *The Beat* in October 2024 it reinforced the ease and suitability of repurposing these waste materials without resorting to harmful and toxic melting and molding which gives off more carbon pollution. Repurposing this way can, if linked with recycling deposit units, considerably reduce our carbon footprint and stem some of the existing plastic garbage, which will alleviate some of the critical pressure on nature, our environmental health and diversity. And as with the frames and plinths exude a playful way to open discussions on a contentious and serious topic.