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Art shines light on plastic pollution

A new Anderson Collection art exhibition focuses on humankind's negative impact on natural bodies of water.

BY ROBIN WANDER

A new exhibition running through Aug. 27 at the Anderson Collection focuses on the human-planet relationship – and shines a spotlight on humanity's unnatural role in natural events.

Titled ***Convergence Zone***, the exhibition features artworks by Deborah Butterfield, who is known for her ghost horse sculptures; artist and ocean scientist Ethan Estess, BS '11, MS '12; eco-artist pioneers Helen and Newton Harrison; and Jean Shin, the 2022-23 Denning Visiting Artist and an artist-in-residence in the lab of pediatric infectious diseases professor **Angelle Desiree LaBeaud** at Stanford School of Medicine. Shin is also this year's Burt and Deedee **McMurtry Lecture speaker on May 10**.

A convergence zone is an atmospheric region where two prevailing winds interact. The air and water flow conditions in convergence zones encourage accumulation, including the amassing of discarded plastics in some ocean regions. The works in *Convergence Zone* bring together reflections on the human impact on bodies of water and how the planet responds with a spectrum of natural consequences.

In the following Q&A, Jason Linetzky, director of the Anderson Collection, and Jean MacDougall, senior registrar for the museum and curator of *Convergence Zone*, discuss the exhibition's origins, understanding global issues through art, and providing artists with the space to experiment.



Anderson Collection Director Jason Linetzky in front of Deborah Butterfield's *Three Sorrows* (quake, tsunami, meltdown from Gretel Ehrlich's *Facing The Wave*), 2016, in the Wisch Family Gallery. Tia Collection, Santa Fe, New Mexico. Image courtesy of the artist and LA Louver, Venice, California. (Image credit: Andrew Brodhead)

What is the origin story of *Convergence Zone*?

MacDougall: I saw a photo of Deborah Butterfield's *Three Sorrows* about a year and a half ago, and three thoughts immediately struck me: First, it's unusual for a Butterfield horse to have "stuff" surrounding it. Second, the "three sorrows" of the 2011 Japan earthquake, tsunami, and nuclear meltdown were poignantly expressed in the assemblage of marine debris surrounding the horse. And finally, I thought that the Wisch Family Gallery on the first floor of the Anderson Collection would be the perfect place to view this sculpture.

Linetzky: For me, the **announcement of the Doerr School** presented an exciting opportunity to celebrate the founding of the new school through the presentation of contemporary works by artists who feel compelled to engage with and address pressing environmental issues through art. The Butterfield sculpture that Jean saw

in the photo was a perfect example, and it started a conversation that evolved into *Convergence Zone*.

MacDougall: Also, exhibiting *Three Sorrows* seemed like a great way to engage with the campus and community on ideas around climate change and plastic pollution in the ocean. Colleagues in the School of Medicine, the Doerr School, and the Department of Art and Art History introduced us to other artists working with similar ideas around humanity's impact on the ocean and waterways, and their effect on us.

One of those entry points that you both speak of is Jean Shin's sculptural work made from plastic bottles titled *Invasives*, which was adapted for *Convergence Zone* and installed at the entrance to the museum. Describe your engagement with her throughout her yearlong residency and what surprised you about creating and installing this site-specific work.

Linetzky: Conversations and in-person visits between Anderson Collection staff and Jean Shin were extremely generative, ultimately centering around ways her work would have a distinct presence at the museum and establish connections between the landscape and architecture. Once we decided to install *Invasives* on the building façade and began modeling and installing, I was especially surprised to see how the sun, shining through the green plastic, cast a beautiful warm green light onto the building and through the second-floor windows. While subtle, it certainly heightened my awareness of the invasive quality of this work.

MacDougall: What surprised me the most was how Jean took the existing separate elements of *Invasives* and precisely adapted them to our site based on our measurements. She also took this as an opportunity to expand the artwork with additional materials, so the artwork "creeps" up the windows and provides a secondary experience of the work from within the museum.

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