



In early 2020, 4th and 5th class went on a visit to the Science Museum at Trinity College Dublin to view the exhibition PLASTIC. This trip was facilitated by The Highlanes Gallery as part of a project that we were incredibly lucky to be a part of. The project was interrupted by Covid 19 but culminated in an exhibition in the Highlanes Gallery, Drogheda, which incorporated images of works made by Marymount students.



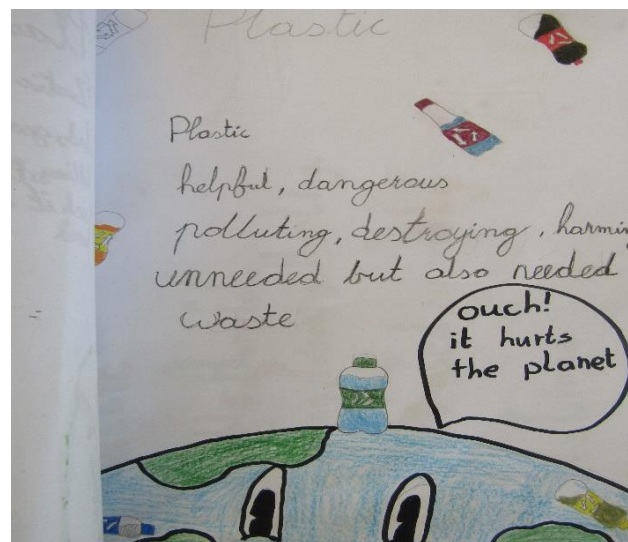
The exhibition itself was fascinating, not only for the children, but also for the adults in attendance. It explored the many uses of plastic as a material in industry, medicine, technology, design and manufacturing. The children were fascinated to find how many everyday objects contained plastic. I distinctly remember their shock when they were informed that nylon “pop socks” were made of a plastic called nylon that came in many different forms.



Many of the installations showed how plastic could be recycled and turned into art. There were decorative wall tiles made from recycled plastic waste found on beaches, large tricycles made from recycled plastic and various models and displays all displaying the positive characteristics of plastic as a material. They learned how plastic has helped modern medicine and how new products are designed using 3D modelling equipment.



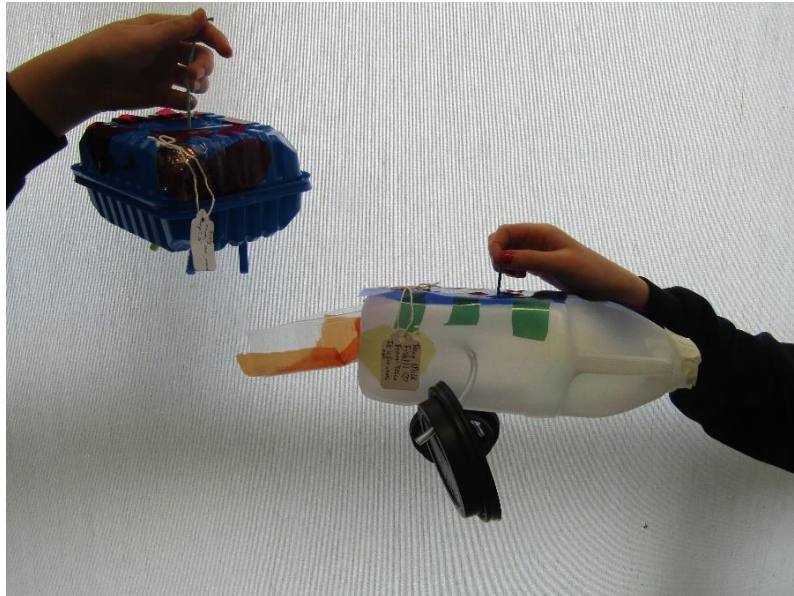
The children also learned, however, about the negative effects of plastic on our environment and how plastic has become present in so many ways in our everyday lives. They took an “entry” test into the environmental area of the museum where they were asked various questions to reflect their own personal use of plastic. Questions such as: have you used a single-use plastic bottle this week? have you chewed chewing gum this week? Is any of your lunch wrapped in plastic? When they passed the test they entered into an area where they learned about how much plastic waste there is in the world, how important it is to recycle plastic and the unfortunate effects of plastic on marine life. The exhibition was highly interactive and made a big impression on the students.



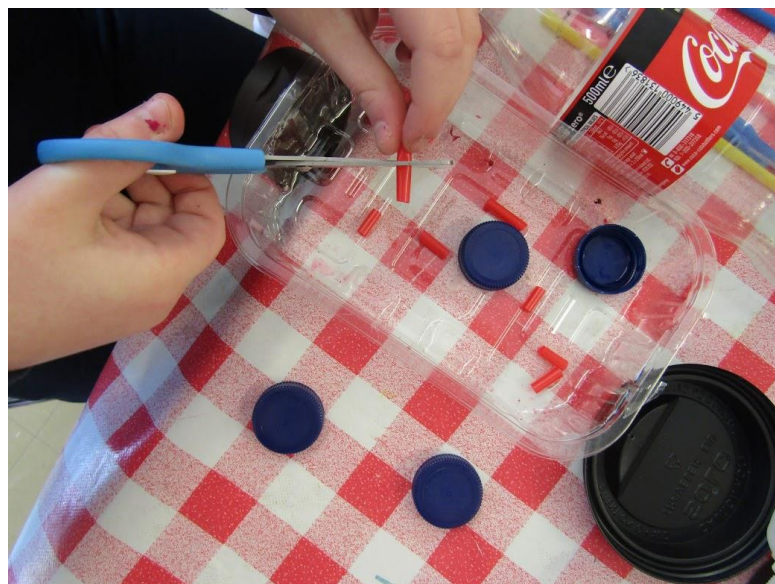
Another great spin-off of the trip was that the pupils got to take a stroll around the grounds of Trinity College. This was a brilliant insight for them into the possibilities of third level education which for many of them may at times seem like a distant reality. The Harry Potter fans among them were really excited to identify the building where some of the movies were filmed. The day out was of enormous benefit to their young minds, in so many ways.



Following this lovely trip, we were privileged to be able to take part in art workshops with Highlanes visual artist, Claire Halpin. Claire's rapport with the children is simply stunning. In a calm and reflective way, she spoke to them about the impact plastic is having on the marine environment in particular and using recycled plastic materials, inspired them to begin creating a unique marine creature of their own.



The construction project involved lots of plastic pots, containers, bottles, tubes, glue guns, plastic twine, tape and other such materials. The children all designed incredibly unique pieces of art and named them using naturalist language.



Overall, this project was of enormous value to the children and I believe strongly that it will stay with them into the coming years, perhaps inspiring future generations of environmentalists, scientists, and artists.

