

# Recycle, reuse and repurpose

We know that environmental art addresses issues relating to the natural and urban environment, but what can we find out about the materials environmental artists use? How do these materials help them to portray important environmental messages?

## Environmental art materials

Unlike land artists, who use materials from the earth, environmental artists use waste or recycled materials to create their artworks. Recycled materials include plastic, glass, metal, tyres, fabric and other found materials that stir the artist's imagination. What materials do you have that could be recycled into a work of art?



## Enhancing the message

Using recycled materials often supports the artist's environmental message. For example, this sculpture of a crab, made directly on the beach using plastic bottles, highlights the damage done to our oceans by single-use plastics.



## Adapting materials

Recycled materials can be used as flexibly as traditional art materials. Plastic bottles can be cut, spiralled or punched with holes; papers can be torn, layered, printed or painted, and metals can be bent, twisted or soldered. When creating art with recycled materials, you should also think of creative ways to assemble and join them.



Image from: Shutterstock editorial/Elena Odareeva



## Past to present

Although plastic is a complex, modern material, we can also see examples of more simple recycled materials used in the artworks of past generations. This collage, called *Head*, was made by the artist Pablo Picasso in 1913. He uses old newspapers and scraps of paper. Other art movements, such as Pop Art, Trash Art or Drap-Art, also make use of waste materials.

## Benefits of using recycled materials

One of the main benefits of creating art using recycled materials is that, instead of filling landfill sites or floating in the ocean, the materials become sustainable art that highlights an environmental message.

Using recycled materials to create artworks also reduces the amount of waste in the environment. Waste items can be upcycled, adapted and made into something useful or beautiful. People who buy this type of art not only find the works attractive for their artistic value but are motivated by contributing to the planet's welfare.



*Head* by Pablo Picasso, 1913

## Further your knowledge

The following artists make art from recycled plastics. Conduct image searches online to find examples of their work.

- Aurora Robson
- Alejandro Durán
- Julia Anne Goodman
- Miwa Koizumi
- Caroline Saul
- Mathilde Roussel-Giraudy
- Robert Bradford
- Anthony Heywood

