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“KEEPING WATCH” on art with an impact

UNC Charlotte Urban Institute launches exhibits to raise awareness of the effects of waste on the environment

JONATHAN GREGORY | APRIL 1, 2014



“Sustain Me Baby” puts plastic waste into perspective. Photo courtesy of KeepingWatch.org

Superman sits directly over the heart of Joyce Dallal’s “The Other Toy Story,” a giant metal toddler filled with toys currently on display in The Projective Eye Gallery on UNC Charlotte’s Center City campus. The famously impervious superhero fits nicely with theme of non-recyclable plastics and the rather drastic impact they have on our environment. Like Superman, “The Other Toy Story” meshes well with the themes of the event it is a part of.

The "KEEPING WATCH" initiative is about spectacle as much as it is about art. Organized by the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute and the College of Arts + Architecture, the initiative's goal is to make a scene and get people thinking. This year's focus is on plastics, and how the community manages them.

"Sustain Me Baby," the larger exhibit "The Other Toy Story" is part of, places the whimsy of Dallal's toy filled work alongside Chris Jordan's "Midway" photography series. The series contains heartbreaking images of baby albatrosses killed after mistakenly ingesting large quantities of plastic waste. A group of dancers from the North Carolina Dance Theater joined the thought provoking combination during the opening reception on March 28. Pairing commentary, abstract music and interpretive dance, the group performed a routine representing the plight of the albatrosses from Jordan's work. After completing their performance, the dancers symbolically helped top off the contents of "The Other Toy Story."



The images of waste that kills albatrosses is an alarming look at the effects of littering. Photo courtesy of KeepingWatch.org

Another, more mobile exhibit joined "Sustain Me Baby" at the KEEPING WATCH initiative's opening reception. Kurt Warnke's "Is This Yours?" exhibit takes KEEPING WATCH's message on the road, setting up its massive 900lb bales of recycled plastic and images from photographer Nancy Pierce in front of Discovery Place and the Government Center. Warnke, already well known for what he calls "trash totems," hopes to bring awareness to the amount of litter people create. Although the plastic bales were created using material from a local recycling center, Warnke says he originally began his trash sculptures by collecting trash from rivers while out kayaking.

Dallal's "The Other Toy Story" will also be joining "Is This Yours?" outside of The Projective Eye Gallery by way of a trio of smaller babies which will go on display at the North Carolina Dance Theater,

Discovery Place and the J. Murrey Atkins Library beginning on April 1. Dallal said she plans to create an entire “fleet” of babies for future exhibits. According to Dallal, her giant baby was inspired by the need to get rid of her own children’s toys, and after failing to find a way to dispose of them responsibly. Dallal hopes expanding the exhibit can help shed light on the problem created by society’s decision to throw away instead of reuse or recycle toys.

This year’s KEEPING WATCH on PLASTICS initiative is currently scheduled to continue into June. A fashion show focusing on clothes made from recycled material call “Recycled Runway” will take place at the Center City campus on April 12, tickets will cost \$10. “Stayin’ Alive,” an exhibit by artist-in-residence Aurora Robson, will be opening May 9 at the McColl Center for Visual Art. A pair free of eco-film screenings accompanied by clean martinis from local distilleries will also be taking place at the Center City campus. “Bag It the Movie” will be screened on May 16, along with a panel on local recycling issues. “Growing Cities” will be screened on June 13, and will also be followed by panel discussing landfills.

Along with KEEPING WATCH on PLASTICS, the Urban Institute has already planned two more KEEPING WATCH initiatives. KEEPING WATCH on CREEKS will take place in 2015 and KEEPING WATCH on AIR in 2016.

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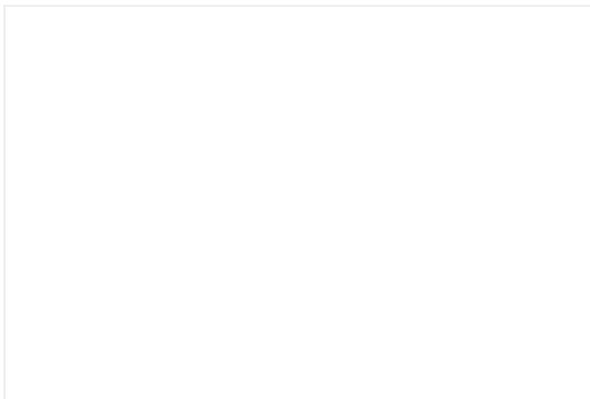
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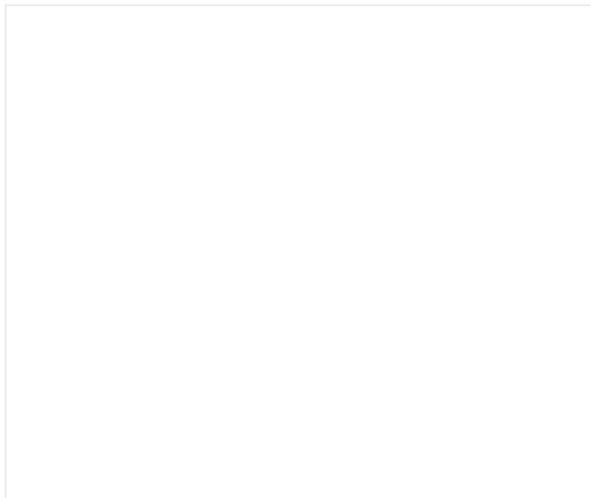
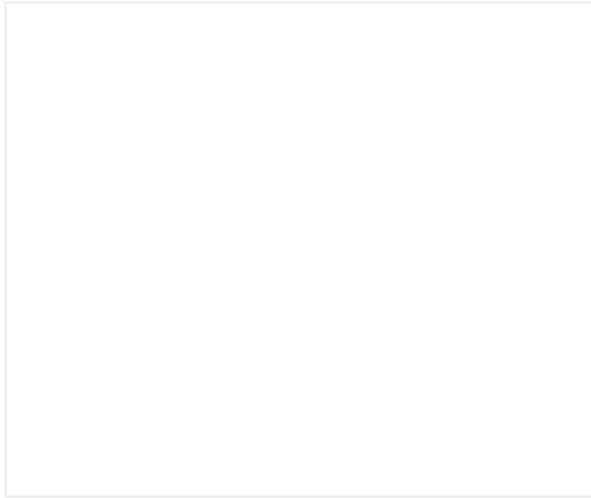
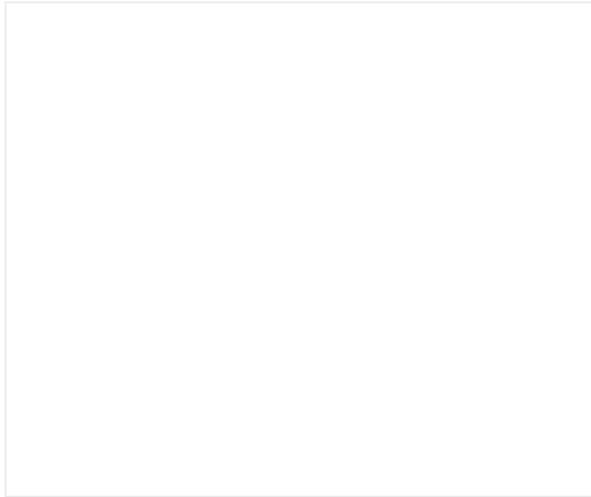
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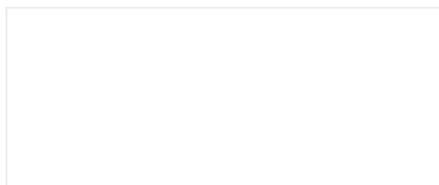
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