Jar in Action

What does sustainability mean to you?

2025-26

Jar in Action is an ongoing project undertaking research into perceptions around sustainability, produced by **Fusion.** With engagement at its core the project asks artists, scientists and communities to create artworks, encapsulated within a jar, in response to the question: **What does sustainability mean to <u>you</u>?**

The project has been supported by libraries, schools and arts organisations to reach out to communities and provide new creative opportunities.

Here Jar in Action presents the most recent artworks submitted since September 2025 and invites audiences to meditate on the question and the unique creative responses exhibited.

Source of artwork

1

- Open Call for jars to Biomedical Sciences third year student cohort, Our Changing World students, Edinburgh Medical School and Institute for Neurology and Cardiovascular Research communities and workshops at The University of Edinburgh
- Others

The work is listed in the catalogue the order it was submitted using the text and images provided by the artists.

We welcome new work to join the growing collection!

Description

001 - Tom Pratt - Consider the trees *1*

Leaf, araldite.

Ginkgo biloba, a living fossil, has been around a long time, so, imagine their surprise sustaining the Hiroshima atom bomb attack, still they sprouted and their descendants now spread symbolising peace - maybe this is one of those. The jar was dropped and glued back together again. No more Hiroshimas please - Shalom.

002 - Remo Pedreschi - Future opportunity *1*

Aluminium shavings

This jar was not intended as an artwork, but has been in my workshop for about two years. It contains shavings from a project to up-cycle aluminium extrusions from an earlier research project into a range of workshop doors. I could not throw them away and they will be melted and cast into suitable objects at a later date. The original extrusions were rectangular box sections and used with minimal adaptation

The jar represents down cycling to material after up-cycling components. Re-use to re-cycle.

003 – Oliwia – Environment *1*

Leaves, rocks, dirt, cork, rusty nail

Represents how we can merge the built environment with the natural world. The materials chosen (rock, cork, nail) can all be used in construction.

004 – Alasdair Kearton - The considerably depressing state of things

1

Leaves, gravel, shards of glass, chocolate wrapper

To me, sustainability involves cutting down on waste and supporting CO2 absorbing plants within nature. This jar reflects the current state of the environment, with the shredded and dead leaves at the bottom, being crushed by a weight of rocks - representing the strain humanity is placing on the natural world, and shards of glass - which represent the harm caused to nature by humans, and the chocolate wrapper on top which reflects society's carelessness and the (in my opinion - ill placed) importance we place on consumerist pleasure.

005 - Gintare Bagacionkaite - Sparking inspiration

1

Glitter

A small jar with big ideas. Sparks. To spark a conversation. To spark a discussion. To spark CHANGE.

006 - David Price - Its got you

1

Biro ink, water

Showing oil and water don't mix

007 – Anon – Unitled

Waste material

1

008 – Calvin Chan - Fallen tree from storm

A fallen tree from Storm Amy

A tree fell by Storm Amy recycled

1

009 – CA – Like trees

Paper, leaves, tree seeds, and plastic decorations

The materials used are reminiscent of a forest. This work aims to convey that by reusing and recycling waste, we can help save our natural forests.

1

010 – Chun – Garden in my jar

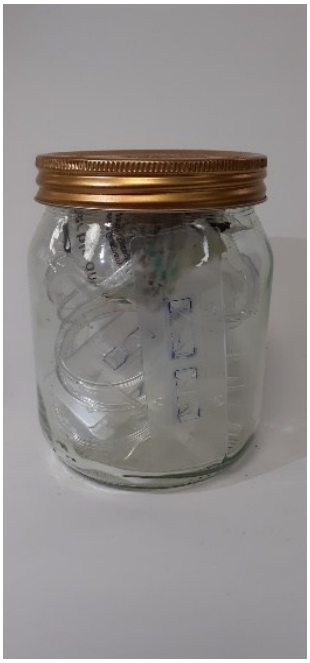
Sawdust, leaves, wood

My jar includes things one would see in a garden and I hope we can altogether take care of nature so that we can continue to enjoy the beauty of it.

1

011 - Kerstin Hasenpusch-Theil - Reduction of Plastic in Research

1



Plates, tips, slides

Although research is necessary to understand diseases and try to cure it, the plastic usage is high. It would be great to be able to recycle some of the used material and to minimise the plastic usage in general.

012 - sam heczko - Light emitting diode

1

saw dust, halogen lamps, leaves, wireless network chip

We tend to be pessimistic about ablility of technology to enhance sustainability. To power the ongoing AI revolution we deprive communites of drinkable water and and open coal mines. However, the humble LED light is example of the opposite - cheap to produce, long lasting and energy efficent - it provides a way of producing light in a way that surpasses the old technologies in every way.

013– Yuchen – Fish in the Box

1

Plastic, coarse fabric, aluminum foil

Fish in the box but wrapped by the fabrics and plastic which is common in our lives but difficult to be degraded in nature, urging the need for developing technologies for better degradation or recycling litters.

014 – AR – The ocean

1

Plastic bag, plastic straw, leaf

The jar holds one straw and one plastic sheet. These are small reminders of a much larger problem: our oceans burdened with countless pieces of plastic. Yet, the jar is not full. Like the vast ocean, there is still room for change, and for responsibility. This jar symbolises warning and hope: while the damage is real, it is not beyond repair.

015 - Niki and Klersa - In the Night Garden

1

Leaves, bracelet, teabag, tea wrapper, feather, string, cork, microchip.

016– Ruby - Watch out! The fish can gigabyte!

1

plastic bag and old parts of a computer board

My jar represents the ongoing issue of e-waste, comprising a surprising amount of plastic in our oceans. The use of an old computer card to make the body of the fish also connotes the issues of underwater data farms that release toxic compounds, heavy metal components and chemical emissions in our seas. It shows an on-the-nose idea of how fish will evolve to handle these harsh conditions.

017 – COB - Silent waste: the cost of everyday carelessness

1

Receipts, tissues, string, a lost cable, teabag wrapper, foam flower, tin foil cake wrapper, treat wrapper, panty liner, pen lid, clipping of participant form

At the bottom of her bag lies a story of everyday waste; crumpled receipts, a single-use sanitary products, a forgotten wrappers, a tangled wire. These aren't just rubbish; they're echoes of careless consumption, quick fixes, and forgotten consequences. Sustainability isn't just about big changes—it's about the small moments we ignore. It's about taking responsibility for every choice, every throwaway. Because these scraps add up. They are polluting our earth and damaging our future. To me, sustainability means honoring the weight of these everyday decisions and choosing to protect what truly matters; our planet, our home, her future.

018 - Madeleine McAllister - Contained nature

1

Net material, rope, leaves, piece of wood

To me, sustainability means respecting the freedom of nature and every living thing within it. The jar represents how humans often confine and control the natural world, just as animals become trapped and entangled in ropes and nets. It reminds me that true sustainability is about releasing those restraints protecting rather than possessing, restoring rather than restricting. Sustainability means creating a world where nature can exist on its own terms, free to grow, breathe, and thrive without human interference.

019 – Kadeena – student

1

Expired pills

Expired pills represent the inequity distribution of resources and waste, causing environmental pollution, and remind us of the importance of sustainable development.

020 - Anna Anderson & Maya Stables -
Compressed coffee

1

Recyclable coffee cup, stirer and milk bottle top

Our work demonstrates that the possibility of sustainablilty in the modern world is sufficated by the extreme trends of student coffee consumptions

021 - AG and ED – Tree jar

1

Leaves, pepiets ,j two jars , battaries .

This jar represents evolution of energy production. From trees getting burned for energy to battaries. The jar makes the viewer think of new ways for reusible energy.

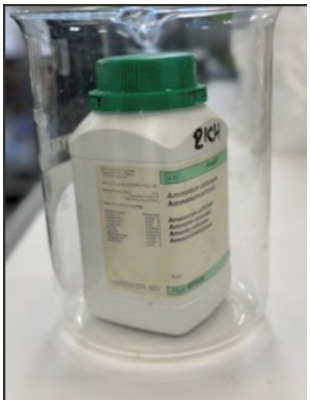
022 - Saskia Allan, Hannah Martin, Carlina Walderdorff -
Health x sustainability

1

Paper, bandage, tampon applicator, swab, pipette tip, stickers, labels, tiptree jar

Reflection of wastage produced by health services

023 - Dr Richard Abell, Julia MacLeod - Sustainability is Sustaining the Population



1

Synthetic Nitrogen chemical of ammonia, container/label. (yet to be acquired)

Discovered in 1918, the synthetic nitrogen chemical of ammonia is used as a proxy for world synthetic nitrogen fertiliser production. Globally nitrogen fertilisers production is responsible for ~1.5% of global CO2 emissions. In our current agricultural system ~ 3 billion on Earth rely on the increased food production possible using synthetic fertilisers.

024 – Emma - Small tips, big impact

1

Pipette tips

Represents the many disposable plastics used in research as small contributions that build up to a large part of the problem of effective sustainability

025 - A.C. – Profit

1

Tree bark, dust-board, twine, leaf

Business profit of our strive to be sustainable. People in hope to make a good impact on the world make concious choices that value the reduce-reuse-recycle statement. Businesses see this as an avenue to charge the public more for consumer products, as sustainability plays on our heartstrings. The businesses use plastic products and trick us into believing we are doing good when in the end its was harmful for the planet to produce that product they sold and charged extra for. A term called greenwashing**.**

026 – Gwen Gump – Run Forest Run

1

Lighters & wood

Arthur's Seat. Californian coastlines. New Zealand's forests. Wild fires are engulfing our planet. The carelessnes of lighter disposal worldwide is a major contributer to these uncontrolable fires. There needs to be more awareness into the impact of unsustainable ligher disposable, and this jar is just the ignition point.

027 – Rosie Cromwell – waste materials

1

paper bag, plastic sleeve, metal canister

When we think about plastic waste in medical waste we often think about sterile packaging that cannot easily be made recyclable. This is a different example - nestled among the paper and cardboard is a plastic sleeve. While this is useful, we don't need another sleeve for every prescription! Think about how easily that builds up, and where else cases like this might appear.

028 – Ruth Pollit - Single Use only

1

plastic, metal, textile

We all benefit from modern hospital care and treatment during our lifetime. In Autumn 2025 my partner spent nine weeks in hospital for his initial surgery and then a further six weeks trying to shake off an infection. The experience revealed the enormous amount of one-use equipment used for his treatment and care. This isn't a new revelation! We all saw this during the Covid-19 pandemic. The items in the jar are just a few examples - yes even the metal scissors! How do we maintain high levels of healthcare and yet reduce, re-use and recycle?

029 – Ruth Pollit - Patient's medication bag

1

Plastic

We all benefit from modern hospital care and treatment during our lifetime. Recent personal experience of my partner being in hospital for nine weeks meant he returned home with the ubiquitous patient's green bag full of new medication. Most of us probably throw these bags away once we return home but they are a super re-use item as they are really sturdy and they have a zip lock closure. But did you know that they are recyclable too?

030 – Thomas Theil – To a sustainable use of jars

1

Fresh orange juice, fresh ginger, lemon juice, sugar, cloves, cinnamon, star anis, citric acid, pectin

Self explanatory

031 - Mara Strang - Reciprocity

1

Pebbles, soil, moss, water

While a terrarium could be seen as an artificial, controlled representation of nature, I use it to explore reciprocity within the web of life. My care for the terrarium becomes part of its ecological process, while its self-regulation and oxygen production, in turn, support and sustain me – serving as a living reminder of our interdependence. To me, the future of sustainability lies in a collective understanding of relationality, from which thriving ecosystems for both humans and nature can emerge.

032 - M.D 'lets have a brew and chat about the climate'

1

Tea box and tart tray

People need to talk more about sustainability and how to implement it in their lives. The easiest way to do this could just be over a coffee/tea with friends

033 - Anne Bellchambers - Pippetual Forest

1

Pippette tips

Rescuing unused lab materials due to refurbishment- looked like trees

034 - Yizhi Xu - It's all about food

1

Stickers from cake tray, feathers, leaves, tea bag packages, polyester fibres

Stickers from the caketrayVand labels from a teabag represent human-centred food systems. In contrast, a leaf belongs to nature — it feeds other organisms and forms part of a wider ecological cycle. The feather symbolises non-human life; its caterpillar-like pattern suggests transformation and the interconnectedness of species through the food chain. Sustainability is about maintaining this relationship between humans and nature, recognising that our survival depends on balance and exchange within the ecosystem.

035 - S Smith – Dragnet

1

Epoxy resin, coloured pigment for epoxy resin, UV resin, cotton wool, sand, acrylic paint, wire, onion net.

Depicts a fishing trawler dragging a net full of fish along the seabed, ploughing through the vegetation. This is a 3-fold sustainability issue - fishing trawlers have powerful diesel engines, which emit particulates and greenhouse gases, they reduce fish stocks, and kill other marine life caught in the nets, while destroying habitats on the seabed.

036 – AG – Radiactivity

1

Yellow tape, plastelin black

This jar is making a statment about radiactive waste. Nucleur energy is viable source of energy, but it is important to properly despose of radiactive waste.

037 - Stephen Maclean - Sustainability in 3D Printing

1

Polylactic acid (PLA) filament, polyvinyl acetate (PVA) filament

3D Printing offers a wide range of benefits for teaching, and especially in anatomy. However, it is also a sustainability nightmare due to the compulsory waste generated (e.g. thin strands from machine purges), the obligatory waste created during calibration and use (e.g. the 'Benchy' boat), failed prints, and the opportunistic waste created by asking if we can, but not if we should (e.g. Pikachu!).

038 - Anne B -Nailed it -Detecting finds

1

Various metal nails (metal type unknown-probably iron)

When metal detecting in the fields of East Lothian I find many nails, sometimes indicating former buildings, dumps of rubbish over many centuries, or having fallen from farm equipment. There is so much metal of many kinds, which if removed could perhaps be re-used in some form, or re-purposed. This jar represents just one or two hours detecting by one person one or 2

039 - JC Denis & Tom Pratt - MAY DAY! – MELTDOWN

1

Some changes cannot be reversed so think very carefully before making them.