



SCULPTURES OR CORAL REEFS?

Going underwater to see works of art

Those who like to dive underwater can admire sea life, old shipwrecks, and now unique works of art.

On the Caribbean island of Grenada, there is a very unusual art gallery. British sculptor Jason deCaires Taylor placed his works on the seabed⁴, creating the first public underwater sculpture park in the world.

A home for corals

The sculptures are more than just art, though. They are designed to encourage the growth⁵ of sea organisms. As time passes (= goes), the artworks change and slowly turn into living coral reefs.

Scientists predict⁶ that 80% of coral reefs will die out by 2050. Taylor is trying to

do something about it by giving corals and other sea organisms a new place to live. He considers his work to be a gift to the sea.

An underwater world

Another project by the artist is MUSA (Museo Subacuático de Arte), the world's largest underwater sculpture museum. It is situated near the Mexican city of Cancún, and there are more than 450 of his sculptures as well as some made by local artists. The largest exhibit is a group of 400 figures, called The Silent Evolution⁷. They were made by creating cement casts⁸ of people living in the surrounding area.



Objects seem 25% larger underwater, and they seem to be closer. The movement of water also influences how we see the sculptures.



'Inertia'¹² shows a fat man, sitting on a sofa, holding a plate with a hamburger and watching TV. There is rubbish lying all around him. It symbolizes how humans **pollute**¹³ the planet and do not care about it.



The sculptures must be made from special material and placed at the seabed at the right time of year to attract corals. Sometimes holes are made into them to make it easier for corals to start growing.



The artist has an atypical helper – the sea itself.

Most of Taylor's sculptures show people, sometimes with typical objects from their lives: a car, a table, a TV. One reason for this is that human shapes are **recognizable**⁹ even when they are radically changed by sea organisms. Also, he wants to show that human relationships with nature can be positive.

Burning problems

Many of Taylor's works comment on environmental problems. For example,

a sculpture called **Inheritance**¹⁰ shows a small child surrounded by rubbish, symbolizing that we may leave a damaged planet for future generations. During the financial crisis, Taylor created **The Banker**, a man on his knees, hiding his head in the sand.

The sea as an artist

Taylor collaborates (= works together) with biologists on his projects and also with a team of people who help him create the sculptures and put them on the bottom of the sea. But he also has one atypical helper: the sea itself. "The coral applies the paint," he says. "The fish supply the atmosphere. The water provides the **mood**¹¹." An example of true co-operation with nature.

Zuzana Pernicová (CR)
Frederik Velinský (CR)

VOCABULARY

- ¹ **coral reef** ['kɔr(ə)l ri:f] – korálový útes
- ² **to dive** ['daɪv] – potápět se
- ³ **shipwreck** ['ʃɪprek] – vrak (lodi)
- ⁴ **seabed** – mořské dno
- ⁵ **to encourage the growth** [grəʊθ] – aby podporovaly růst

- ⁶ **to predict** [prɪ'dɪkt] – předpovídat
- ⁷ **evolution** [i:və'lʊ:ʃ(ə)n] – evoluce (vývoj)
- ⁸ **cement casts** [sɪ'ment] – betonové odlitky
- ⁹ **recognizable** ['rekəgnɪzəb(ə)] – rozeznatelné

- ¹⁰ **inheritance** [ɪn'hert(ə)ns] – dědictví
- ¹¹ **mood** – nálada
- ¹² **inertia** [ɪ'nɜ:ʃə] – netečnost, lhostejnost
- ¹³ **to pollute** [pə'lju:t] – znečišťovat
- ¹⁴ **reservoir** ['rezəvwa:] – přehradní nádrž
- ¹⁵ **valley** ['væli] – údolí

LANGUAGE POINT

burning problems – 'burning' means that something is on fire or very hot, but the word can also be used to stress (= highlight) the importance or urgency of the discussed issue



Jason deCaires Taylor (born 1974) is a British sculptor, diving instructor and underwater photographer. He grew up in Europe and Asia, and since his childhood has enjoyed exploring coral reefs. Combining his interests, he creates art that is transformed (= changed) by the environment and turns into a living organism. He also takes photographs of his underwater sculptures. You can check out Taylor's work at www.underwatersculpture.com.



CZECH UNDERWATER SCULPTURE

In 2011, Willyteam divers decided to put a sculpture at the bottom of the Slapy **reservoir**¹⁴ in Central Bohemia. Their motivation was different than Taylor's: A statue of St John of Nepomuk used to stand next to the Vltava River between Štěchovice and Slapy, and gave name to the St John rapids (Svatojanské proudy). However, the **valley**¹⁵ was flooded in the 1950s when the Slapy reservoir was built, and the statue was removed.

The divers asked sculptor Petr Váňa to make a new, modern sculpture. They lowered it to the bottom of the reservoir in May 2012, and placed it where the original statue used to stand. However, only a few people can see the sculpture as it is 40 metres under water. You can read more about the project at www.sochapodvodou.cz.