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Surface Tension: the Future of Water

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Surface Tension: the Future of Water is an exhibition at the [Science Gallery](#) in Dublin on until January 20, 2012.



Jane Withers

What excited me about Surface Tension was the multidisciplinary approach: the Science Gallery is part of Trinity College and is characterised by an open conversation between the arts and sciences. For Surface Tension the selection was deliberately broad, tapping into different aspects of this fluid, amorphous and critical subject. It included everything from engineer's solutions to artists' imaginings, from the local to the global, from mega projects to small touches aimed at making us think a little differently about water in our lives and in our world.

In 'Drink' visitors could follow a project by engineers at Trinity College to provide clean drinking water in villages in Kenya via a simple system that uses sunlight to destroy disease carrying pathogens in polluted drinking water with ultra-violet radiation and solar heat disrupting their metabolism and cellular structures.



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Next door they could test 'Pouch', an idea for promoting water conservation by making us more conscious of water as we use it. Inspired by a cow's udder, you pull and squeeze the tip to fill a glass, so the water is drawn carefully rather than running freely as it does from a tap. Sustainability demands that we change our habits and tease out these new relationships with water to enjoy it in different less wasteful ways.

In 'Dirty', visitors could see a proposal for how the massive problem of plastic pollution in our seas could be turned into a resource.



Pouch by Olivia Decaris

The designers behind the Sea Chair project invented the 'Nurdler', a hand-powered machine that sorts plastic pellets from larger pieces of waste. They propose turning a retired fishing trawler into a plastic factory, and employing redundant fishing communities to harvest plastic from the sea and use it as the raw material for injection moulding.



Sea Chair by Alexander Groves, Azusa Murakami and Kieran Jones

It might sound far-fetched, but with the EU considering plans to pay fisherman for plastic by-catch, perhaps a floating factory ship that recycles this marine debris might not be such a mad idea? In any case, the designers here are less about offering a large scale solution than a ground-up approach - small actions that are about inspiring people.





Sea Chair by Alexander Groves, Azusa Murakami and Kieran Jones

The brave could taste a glass of fresh Dublin canal water provided by 'Drink Local Water, Whatever it is', a provocative public art project by designer Colin Hart. At the canal site he place an advertisement for a hypothetical bottled water company directing passers-by to the Science Gallery to taste their product. In the Gallery the exhibit is a water filtration system laying bare the process of turning polluted canal water into something drinkable. In cities around the world water is already captured, cleaned and redistributed from sewage and grey water, yet this is something we find difficult to face.



Drink local water... Whatever it is by Colin Hart

Together these projects show how thinking about water is changing and the concerns of a rising generation. The big problem at the moment is that we simply don't value water. We value other natural resources – oil and gas, gold and pearls – but we take water for granted. Reconnecting to water, raising awareness and revaluing water are the first steps to change.

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