



ARTS & CULTURE

Pain into Beauty: Argentine Sculptor Turns Pandemic Waste into Art

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Argentine artist Marcelo Toledo usually creates his works out of metal. But now Toledo is working with new materials: used **masks** and **syringes** from the COVID-19 pandemic. His aim is to create a show that explores the painful effects of the virus.

Toledo has made jewelry for the musical “Evita” on Broadway in New York. He has created special pieces for people like former U.S. President Barack Obama and singer Madonna.

Toledo was among the first in Argentina to become infected with COVID-19 a year ago. He was hospitalized for eight days. The experience affected him deeply. It led him to begin creating new kinds of artwork, such as a 14-meter mask with the Argentine flag, which he placed on the famous Obelisk in Buenos Aires.

His new show is called the “Museum of the After.” Toledo has been collecting coronavirus waste sent by hospitals, laboratories and other people. The waste materials include old vaccines and newspaper stories about the pandemic.

“I am excited to be able to **transform** pain into beauty and this **exhibition** is just that, capturing everything that is happening to us as a **society**,” Toledo told Reuters reporters.

His latest works of art will go on show in September in a public area in Buenos Aires. They will all be made from materials that people have sent him.

“It is the first time that I do an exhibition in which I do not have to buy any of the elements,” he said.

Part of the exhibition includes a ship that crosses a “storm,” as well as recycling islands.

“The exhibition will tell the story of this ship that went sailing and was stranded after the storm, which is a great **metaphor** for what is happening to us,” Toledo said.

The idea of the ‘Museum of the After’ is to represent the world during COVID-19 and to recreate it in other places, Toledo explained.

He added that he hoped to “get a physical museum to leave the work for **posterity**.”

I’m Susan Shand.

The Reuters News Agency reported this story. Susan Shand adapted it for Learning English. Ashley Thompson was the editor.

Words in This Story

mask – *n.* a face covering

syringe – *n.* a device made of a hollow tube and a needle that is used to force fluids into or take fluids out of the body

transform – *v.* to change something completely in a good way

exhibition – *n.* an event at which objects (such as works of art) are put out in a public space for people to look at

society – *n.* people in general thought of as living together in organized communities with shared laws, traditions, and values

metaphor – *n.* a word or phrase for one thing that is used to refer to another thing in order to show or suggest that they are similar

posterity – *n.* people in the future

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