

# THE AGE OF PLASTIC

INGENUITY + RESPONSIBILITY



An Interdisciplinary Symposium

Stone Age, Bronze Age, Iron Age...and now the Age of Plastic. The Smithsonian Institution is leveraging its collections—arguably the world's greatest repository of plastic material culture—to investigate the significance of plastic, its influence in our lives, and how we document and preserve this history. Join us for a dynamic conversation of historians, scientists, conservators, artists, and designers in which we explore the material, cultural, and environmental phenomenon of the material we call plastic. In fewer than 200 years it has transformed our world such that we can't imagine life without it, have only begun to consider the ingenuity of its discovery... and we aren't even sure we want it.

Presented by

Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute

Smithsonian Consortium for Understanding the American Experience

Smithsonian Consortium for World Cultures

June 7-8, 2012

Nan Tucker McEvoy Auditorium

Smithsonian American Art Museum

800 F Street NW (enter G St.)

Washington, DC

**All are welcome, but space is limited**

**To register send email to [MCIWeb@si.edu](mailto:MCIWeb@si.edu)**

**Scroll down for the Program**



**Smithsonian Institution**

# The Age of Plastic: Ingenuity + Responsibility

An Interdisciplinary Two-Day Symposium  
Convened by the Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute  
Thursday, June 7 and Friday, June 8, 2012

## PROGRAM

### THURSDAY, JUNE 7

- 9:00 - 9:10 Welcome address from G.Wayne Clough, Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution
- 9:10 - 9:15 Introduction:  
Robert Koestler, Director, Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute (MCI)
- 9:15 - 9:55 Keynote address:  
Bill Moggridge, Director of the Smithsonian Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum  
*Designing Plasticity*

#### MORNING SESSION: BIG PICTURE THINKING

- 10:00 - 10:30 Odile Madden, Head of Modern Materials Research, Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute (MCI)  
*The Age of Plastic*
- 10:30 - 11:00 COFFEE BREAK
- 11:00 - 11:30 Susan Freinkel, Science Writer and Author  
*Plastic: A Toxic Love Story*
- 11:30 - 12:00 Bill Ayrey, Historian and Manager of the Test Lab, ILC Dover  
*Plastics and the Space Program*
- 12:00 - 12:30 Deborah Mielewski, Chemical Engineer and Technical Leader of Plastics Research Group, Ford Motor Company  
*Biodegradability, Recyclability and Engineered Plastics*
- 12:30 - 2:00 LUNCH BREAK
- 2:00 - 2:30 Mary Brooks, Independent Consultant, Curator and Conservator  
*'Astonish the world with ... your new fibre mixture': Producing, Promoting and Forgetting Mid-twentieth Century Man-made Protein Fibres*



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## AFTERNOON SESSION: PRESERVATION, DURABILITY, RENEWABILITY

Session Chair: Michelle Delaney, Director of Smithsonian Consortium for Understanding the American Experience

- 2:30 - 3:00 Thea van Oosten, Senior Conservation Scientist, Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE)  
*Preserving Plastic: Challenges in Conservation of Cultural Heritage*
- 3:00 - 3:30 COFFEE BREAK
- 3:30 - 4:00 L. H. (Hugh) Shockey, Objects Conservator, Lunder Conservation Center, Smithsonian American Art Museum (SAAM)  
*When Intervention Has To Happen: Conservation and Restoration of Resin Sculpture*
- 4:00 - 4:30 Molly McGath, Post Graduate Research Fellow, Smithsonian Museum Conservation Institute (MCI)  
*Engineered Obsolescence: A Plastic that Turns Into Gravel*
- 4:30 - 5:30 Panel Discussion: Speakers from Thursday Session



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FRIDAY, JUNE 8

9:00 - 9:30 Keynote address:  
Robert Friedel, Technological Historian, Professor of History, University of Maryland  
*Is It Real? Imitation and Originality in Synthetic Plastics*

## MORNING SESSION: TO CONSUME AND RE-CONSUME

Session Chair: Nancy Wallace, Program Director, Marine Debris Group  
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)

9:30 - 10:00 Cory Bernat, Food Historian, Member Smithsonian “Food and Wine History Team”  
Smithsonian National Museum of American History  
*Plastic and Food Culture*

10:00 - 10:30 Jan Vozenilek, Photographer and Cinematographer  
*Midway Island: A Message from the North Pacific Gyre*

10:30 - 11:00 COFFEE BREAK

11:00 - 11:30 Pierre Comizzoli, Gamete Biologist, Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute’s  
Center for Species Survival.  
*Separating Good Plastic from Bad Plastic in Conservation Biology*

11:30 - 12:00 Mike Biddle, President and Founder, MBA Polymers  
*Supply Chain Becomes Supply Cycle: Closing the Loop with Plastics*

12:00 - 1:00 Panel Discussion: Speakers from Friday Session, moderated by John Kress, Director of  
the Smithsonian Consortium for Understanding and Sustaining a Biodiverse Planet

1:00 Closing Remarks: Robert Friedel

