

What A Wonderful World by Alberto Martinez



Because there are a lot of big cities in the world, people who live in cities have become more isolated than ever. Alberto Martinez paints a city. It looks like London, it sounds like London, but it could be anywhere.

All around are inanimate objects, disposable items, things that we see every day and yet we do not notice. As we look up, the concrete jungle sprawls out in front of us and becomes hazy. The lines blur. The details become insignificant.

What A Wonderful World is Martinez's colourful and playful look at 21st Century city life.

In the foreground, structures have been substituted for objects that make statements. A floating USB stick on the river highlights our obsessions with data and technology. We see perfume, contraceptives and other expendable items.

Alberto questions our reliance on modern medicines and has a playful dig at the pharmaceutical industry with the giant lipstick.

Our own small area of the city is cluttered and so full of material positions that we are sometimes blinkered.

The £10 note origami boat floating on the water is Alberto's playful take on the stock market that rises and falls like the tide and with the poker chips, we can lose all our money in the roll of a dice!

Alberto comments on our efforts in recycling with the light bulb re-purposed as a vase.

He has placed a large nest in the centre of the painting which is his way of showing how wildlife has had to adapt to new environments. The nest has eggs but also a lot of man-made rubbish.

Elsewhere there is a toy giraffe with its head in a bubble. This is Alberto's nod to pollution. In the wild, giraffes breathe fresh, clean air, but in cities we need fresh air pumped in to survive.

The rubber duck floating down the Thames is Alberto's whimsical reference to the NHS. The duck is following the path of the water, not in control of its own destiny and will inevitably end up somewhere else.

In true Martinez style, Cuban references mix seamlessly with the UK.

His Cuban cigar stands proudly in the centre of the image. The giant cricket ball depicts the British love of cricket and the chess piece and dice illustrates both nations love of games.

The background of the image is littered with cinematic imagery: the Imperial Star Destroyer (Star Wars), The Sulaco (Alien) and the Tyrell Corporation Building (Blade Runner).

Martinez mixes the boundaries between fantasy and reality. From the 'matches' of Battersea Power Station to the 'pencil' of The Shard, Alberto has filled his city snapshot with many quirky images of how we are building our own destiny and should take every opportunity to reflect.



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