

Art 200: Art & Community

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Ocean Pollution

Seventy-two percent of the planet's surface is covered by oceans. Within that seventy-two percent of the coverage, it provides ninety-seven percent of the world's water supply thus creating seventy percent of the oxygen we breathe. We are failing the earth, letting the animals within seventy-two percent of the planet die and suffer from our trash. The pollution in the ocean is mostly plastic such as single-use plastic bags, water bottles, and drinking straws. There are ten river systems that researchers found to carry most of the plastic that ends up in the ocean. Out of these ten rivers eight of them are in Asia including the Yangtze, Indus, Yellow, Hai He, Ganges, Pearl, Amur, and Mekong. Those rivers alone bring about eighty-eight to about ninety nine percent of the plastic to the oceans. These river systems are sending tons of plastic into the ocean and creating the problem.

Within the last decade on this earth, we as humanity have produced more plastic than had been produced in the last one hundred years. Each year researchers estimate that about thirteen million metric tons of plastic gets put into the ocean through flooding, drainage, rivers, and fishing equipment. When this plastic enters the water, it immediately endangers the animals living there. These animals become at risk for ingesting the plastic which won't digest in their stomach and will eventually kill them. Animals can become entangled in the plastic trash unable to move and having this entanglement cut into their bodies. There is estimated to be about eight hundred distinct species affected worldwide by water pollution. If the trash were cleaned up at the start on land or in the river systems, the large population of animal life in the oceans would be saved.

This issue starts small and without being addressed leads to the major ocean pollution problems. This wide range of plastic in the ocean can be prevented with simple recycling of household items. There are organizations trying to address this widespread problem worldwide but there aren't enough resources to keep up with the speed of pollution. The Grassroots organizations are groups that work small going from riverbanks and beaches cleaning up all the trash that has washed up or would have washed into the water. Then there are the large-scale organizations that work domestically or internationally. The Ocean Conservancy is a group that works internationally, they are going out into the ocean and trying to make an impact on this large-scale problem. One problem spot is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch which spans waters from the West Coast of North America to Japan. This garbage patch on its own consists of 1.8 trillion pieces of plastic weighing 79,000 metric tons. The group Ocean Cleanup is working on getting fifty percent of this garbage patch cleaned up. They are going to be able to achieve this goal by using innovative technology that allows for efficient cleanup of this debris, but in order for groups like these to continue to achieve goals like this they need help from the people

creating the problem. That seventy two percent of earth being covered in water is turning into the earth being covered in trash.

On this quilt block I worked to demonstrate what the ocean pollution is doing in a visual way. I wanted to express the importance of being aware of your surroundings and what your actions are doing to the environment. Within this quilt block I have incorporated the animal life that is affected by the pollution. I used a turtle that I surrounded with plastic and other items that could have been recycled and never ended up in the ocean. I tried to keep the quilt block simple by limiting the add on. I wanted the focus point of the quilt to be the turtle surrounded by the garbage because I believe that it is able to help draw the emotional response to bring change to this issue. I used a simple dark blue background that appears to look like the ocean itself with the deep blue with some lighter patches in it. I added the facts to the block to allow the viewer to understand the severity of these issues within the first minute of looking at the block. I chose two facts that stood out to me, one relating to the turtle I added to the block “800 species worldwide are affected by water pollution” and then the other “About 13 million metric tons of plastic ends up in the ocean each year” being an overview of the issues as a whole. I was particular about the items that I added to this quilt block even with the plastic pieces I added being garbage I collected from my own personal use including the granola wrapper, Pop Tart wrapper, the single use Walmart plastic bag, and the six-pack rings. I specifically used the Walmart plastic bag to represent the large companies and their widespread effect, and I was careful placing this item to allow the Walmart logo to be seen clearly in the upper left corner.

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