



Honor College at Salisbury University

Honors Thesis

An Honors Thesis Titled

CONSIDER THIS: IT'S TIME WE THOUGHT ABOUT WHAT KIND OF WORLD WE ARE
LEAVING FOR KEITH RICHARDS

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Introduction

Salisbury University is home to about 8,748¹ undergraduate students. This is a relatively small college population when compared with the likes of Pennsylvania State University whose undergraduate enrollment is about 41,359² or Ohio State University whose enrollment is about 45,831.³ However, a group of almost 9,000 people still have a significant impact on our environment. Sadly, few people are educated about, or even consider, how their daily actions impact their local ecosystems, let alone the grater planet. Specifically speaking, the student population of Salisbury University does not seem to be aware of their impact on the largest estuary in the United States,⁴ the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. This ignorance is paired with outward claims of loving the beach and our school's location, but habits like excessive burning of fossil fuels, waste production and overconsumption of goods contradicts these claims of love. Our actions do not reflect our words. There are many issues in our global environmental crisis, but for my project I have chosen to focus on issues relating to student behavior. Specifically, regarding over consumption and pollutions. These issues can be further defined as generally relating to waste production, carbon emissions, food waste, electricity usage and product consumption. Sources explaining environmental threats to marine environments have been combined with examples of effective uses of art and advertisements in environmental campaigns to create my own addition to environmentalist art. Artists like Ansel Adams and Mary Frank

¹ "How Does Salisbury University Rank Among America's Best Colleges?" U.S. News & World Report, accessed February 01, 2018, <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/salisbury-university-2091>.

² "How Does Penn State Rank Among America's Best Colleges?" U.S. News & World Report, accessed February 01, 2018, <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/penn-state-6965>.

³ "How Does Ohio State Rank Among America's Best Colleges?" U.S. News & World Report. Accessed February 01, 2018. <https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/ohio-state-6883>.

⁴ "Bay 101," Chesapeake Bay Program, 2018, <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/discover/bay-101>.

have paved the way for more contemporary organizations like the Ocean Preservation Society and Exposure Lab to utilize visual aids to educate and inform the public. My goal is to create a photography show aimed at educating the Salisbury University student body on their environmental impacts and provide an open dialogue where the viewers then had an opportunity to further their exploration and education or get directly involved in local sustainability efforts. This gallery exhibition is meant to visually spell out how the environmental impacts of our everyday behaviors translate to our immediate community and then to the coastal beaches of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. My work is inspired by and uses a collaboration of tactics demonstrated by historical and contemporary artists. Fifteen images, accompanied a small informational display, will have been exhibited in the Salisbury University owned Gallery 303.

The Scientific Issues

To choose which issues this project should focus on, three resources were cross-referenced. The Chesapeake Bay Program's (CBP) website was combined with an article from 2007 entitled *Evaluating and Ranking the Vulnerability of Global Marine Ecosystem to Anthropogenic Threats*⁵ and a book entitled "The Nature of College." The CBP's page "Learn the Issues" was the basis for discovering potential areas on which to focus. From this page I narrowed down the categories on which I wanted to focus to Agriculture, Air Pollution, Climate Change, Forest Loss and Polluted Runoff.⁶ I chose these in part because they are all topics relating to direct human impact as well as issue I believed to be prominent in our community. To

⁵ From here on out, this article will be referred to as Anthropogenic Threats.

⁶ "Learn the Issues," Chesapeake Bay Program, accessed March 2018, <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/issues/>.

ensure I was covering the right topics, I then took these categories and cross-referenced them with the issues and threats defined in the *Anthropogenic Threats* article.

The *Anthropogenic Threats* article highlights 38 specific threats to marine environments that originate with human activity. The evaluations done by the authors included measuring threat impacts upon the individual species, as well as the entirety of the ecosystem. The authors do admit that although this is a scientific exploration, the conclusions reached are based on their expert opinions. They combated potential bias by organizing the data in to quantitative charts that can also be used by readers to reach their own conclusions. It is from these charts that I chose the top five ecological threats to be compared with my other two sources. Their data shows that the categories of demersal destructive fishing, sea temperature rise, coastal development, point source organic pollution, increased sediment input, hypoxia, and direct human contact⁷ are the highest-ranking threats to marine environments.

At this stage, I compared these threats with the issues I had chosen to focus on from the CBP's website and determined that before considering relevance to the college-aged population, I would focus on issues revolving around sea temperature rise, organic pollution, increased sediment input and direct human contact. These threats related to and further specified the general topics of agriculture, air pollution, climate change, forest loss and polluted runoff. My final step was to compare these to my research about relevancy to college student behavior.

"The Nature of College," a novel by James J. Farrell, speaks mostly about issues within the culture of college students and highlights concerns surrounding energy consumption habits, overconsumption, lack of knowledge and a disconnection between daily resources and their

⁷ Benjamin S. Halpern, Kimberly A. Selkoe, Fiorenza Micheli, and Carrie V. Kappel, "Evaluating and Ranking the Vulnerability of Global Marine Ecosystems to Anthropogenic Threats" (2007), 1311.

origins. The chapters in this book define its focuses as being on college student's "stuff," "clothes," "food," "cars," "screens," "parties," "religion," "politics," and "love."⁸ Although the writing is a bit outdated, it was still effective and applicable when used to explore theories about college students' attitudes and practices. Much of the behavioral patterns Farrell discusses are still relevant to today's student population. Such as the disassociation with the origins of products, the financial factors that affect student's budgets and the marketing designed to promote obsessive consumption. He spoke a lot about the dangers of consumption and how as a society we are taught that consuming more is better. College students truly believe that they need a new outfit for every time they go out to a party or a bar because our society has been constructed to function this way. It is not just the university student population, but the whole United States that is obsessed with having the newest, best and usually most expensive technology and products on the market. This book helped me better define the behavioral issues within the college student's ecological practices.

After comparing these behavioral concerns with the issues I had chosen from CBP's website and the *Anthropogenic Threats* article, I determined that I would focus my efforts on educating college students about much of the population's everyday habitual behavioral actions. For example, everyone eats, buys items, uses electricity and drives or rides in a vehicle. Though these actions are critical to survival in this geographical area, there are efforts that can be taken to ensure that individuals are living a more sustainable and less impactful existence. This meant that when making my pictorial representations I would be covering subjects like material waste production, carbon emissions, food waste, electricity usage and product consumption. These categories are loosely defined because all actions are connected to one another and are all part of

⁸ James J. Farrell, *The Nature of College; How a New Understanding of Campus Life Can Change the World* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 2010), Table of Contents.

the greater web of issues. All the categories I chose to focus upon have some effect on climate change, pollution, habitat destruction and many other global issues. Carbon dioxide emissions, from the burning of fossil fuels, are tied in with electricity usage, waste production and of course, the driving of vehicles. This leads to a rise of carbon dioxide in the water of our oceans and bay, which consequently leads to higher acidity levels that make it difficult for oysters and other shellfish to produce calcium carbonate, a key component in their shells. In addition to overharvesting, this is one of the main threats to oyster populations. Oysters are an extremely important aspect of the Bay ecosystem because they filter the water. With the decline of oysters in the Chesapeake Bay, we have seen drastic deterioration in water quality and subsequent impacts on other Bay fauna and flora. For example, the decline in oysters was accompanied by decreases in submerged aquatic vegetation (SAV), leading to declines in blue crabs and many fish species that rely on SAV for habitat as juveniles.⁹ Situations such as this demonstrate the interconnectedness of everything on the planet.

Art as A Catalyst for Change

In simplified terms I am trying to convey the same ideas that Rachel Carson preached in her books. Carson was a marine biologist and conservationist who is well known for her books *Silent Spring*, *The Sea Around Us*, *Under the Sea Wind* and *The Sense of Wonder*. In *The Sea Around Us*, she explains that “it is a curious situation that the sea, from which life first arose should now be threatened by the activities of one form of that life. But the sea, though changed in a sinister way, will continue to exist; the threat is rather to life itself.”¹⁰ Our actions are harming the marine environments in many ways and essentially this means we are harming

⁹ Kasandra Rose, "Does CO2 Deplete the Ozone Layer?" Sciencing, April 13, 2018, <https://sciencing.com/co2-deplete-ozone-layer-4828.html>.

¹⁰ Rachel Carson, *The Sea Around Us* (Oxford University Press, 1951).

ourselves. Many of the people living in today's world live in a state of disassociation. People do not know exactly where their food comes from, or who made their clothing or how many resources went in to making their newest iPhone. Instead we live in blissful ignorance, only thinking about the present and ourselves. For now, our processes and situations seem to be working, but their long-term sustainability is essentially nonexistent. I am aiming to help others see the truth of our lives' impacts upon our planet and the subsequent impact on the future of the world.

When looking at art as a tool to enact change, there are an almost unlimited number of examples. Even after narrowing this down to environmentalist-oriented art, there are countless artists and projects that demonstrate ways in which art can be used to expose environmental issues, promote awareness of problems and educate about, or encourage people to lead more sustainable lives. Part of the reason there is an overwhelming pool of examples is because art can be many things. For simplification purpose I chose to focus this exploration of environmentalist art on painting, photography, poetry, music, advertisements and cinematography.

Starting in the realm of fine arts, I investigated the work of artist Mary Frank. She works in sculpture, drawing, painting, paper cutouts and monoprints. Her works often feature human body forms in collaboration with elements of nature and wildlife. Frank visited Africa, which inspired a series of drawings she then used in a collaborative publication, *Shadow of Africa*, with poet Peter Matthiessen. These same drawings, paintings and literature were first featured in an art exhibition in the New York Zoological Society's Zoo Gallery at the Central Park Zoo in 1993¹¹. Her images beautifully illustrate the magnificence and power of the animals of African wildlife. When she integrates the human figure into the work she is displaying this reality of

¹¹ "Exhibitions." *New York Magazine*, November 9, 1992, 100.

ever-present interconnectedness. This type of representation helps the viewers appreciate the creatures and creates a sense of awe, effectively “drawing attention and support to the protection of wild animals the worlds over”¹² through its imagery. At the same time, the abstract nature of her illustrations helps add to the communication each piece has with its viewer. Each spectator has a different relationship with the piece. This project is meant to be more than just an art exhibit, or book, it is meant to be a spark that inspires someone to do more and get involved. Publications of Frank’s work also often include images of her notes and personal written thoughts. These notes display the various ways in which she considers the interactions her work inspires. Whether those interactions be between herself and the work, the work and the viewer or the work and other works with which it is displayed. This is an extremely important part of effective art work that often gets over looked for the more favored method of just considering two of the three lines of communication in which a piece takes part.

Delving deeper into the world of environmental activism, I found there are few groups more well-known than the Sierra Club. It is with their Coffee Table book series that I found a well-known artistic activism attempt. These were a series of large format books measuring about ten inches by twelve inches. The first book in the series was published in 1960 and the series continued to be added to until 1969. Originally it was the Wilderness Bill,¹³ introduced in 1956, that inspired David Bower¹⁴ to create the series. The first book was made as an effort to persuade congress to pass the bill. Images from photographers like Ansel Adams and Eliot Porter were

¹² Peter Matthiessen and Mary Frank, *Shadows of Africa* (New York City: New York Zoological Society, 1992), inside cover.

¹³ This was a bill that established a national system that federally protected land.

¹⁴ David Brower was the executive direct of the Sierra Club for seventeen years, from 1952-1969.

featured in the books. Adam's work featured sweeping views of impressive places like Yosemite and Kings Canyon. Porter's work captured the serenity of Maine's untouched wildlife. Both men's photographs "present nature as sacred and sublime."¹⁵ It was this portrayal of nature that the Sierra Club hoped would motivate the public, and Congress, to care about protecting and preserving wild American land. Their work was, and still is, about changing public policies which is a very important part of attempting to change the ways of our current society.

Individuals are important but appealing to many makes changing the larger governing rules and attitudes an easier process. In 1962 the group published *In Wilderness Is the Preservation of the World*, featuring the photographs of Porters paired with the writing of Henry David Thoreau. The public was so excited about this pairing that the "first printing of this book sold out before the book was even available."¹⁶ Admirers and fans of Henry David Thoreau have referred to him as "a sage of the wild and a prophet of preservation."¹⁷ Although he is most famous for his book *Walden* it is more specifically in the books printed by the Sierra Club that we see Thoreau's words used in a purposely environmental activist sense. Though he is not a poet, anyone who has read Thoreau can admit that his writing is artistic in nature. He philosophizes about simple living and his views of issues with the government.

In a more contemporary fashion, his work with words lead me to discover the poetry of two women featured in a recent issue of Orion magazine. Natalie Diaz and Louise Erdrich use

¹⁵ Finis Dunaway, *Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 119.

¹⁶ Finis Dunaway, *Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 149.

¹⁷ Finis Dunaway, *Natural Visions: The Power of Images in American Environmental Reform* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 149.

their words to create a form of art that expresses their concerns about the Keystone XL pipelines and Native American land exploitation. These women are speaking about deeply personal topics, but their point is still that our societal habits are detrimental to the earth on which we live. Diaz asks her readers "If we poison and use up our water, how will we cleanse ourselves of these sins?"¹⁸ In much simpler terms, that does not do her art justice, she is asking her readers that if we poison the substance we use to cleanse ourselves literally and spiritually, and drink to survive, how can we expect to live on this earth at all, especially in good conscious. Her poem features a very intimate connection to a specific group of Native Americans being affected and uses this connection to help others get a glimpse at the severity of the situation. Erdrich's poem is much more direct. She commands her readers to do things like "resist the distractions of excess" and "resist the millionth purchase."¹⁹ Her poem suggests ways in which people can make a change in their behaviors and live a more sustainable life. Her art is severe and honest, meaning her communication is clear and cannot be overlooked. She calls out the reader and gives a solution to their problems. We overconsume. We need to stop. Her poem touches on the topic of consumerism, one of the main issues I focus on in my photographic work. These poems inspire contemplation and force the reader to analyze the words they have read to make a judgement about the poems and possibly about themselves as well.

Music affects listeners in this same personal way. Music is something that spans cultures, generations, genders and almost every category of differentiation. It is something that ties humanity together and therefore is a very powerful medium of communication. In 1995

¹⁸ Natalie Diaz and Layli Long Soldier, "Women and Standing Rock," *Orion Magazine*, December 2017, <https://orionmagazine.org/article/women-standing-rock/>.

¹⁹ Lousie Erdrich and Layli Long Soldier, "Women and Standing Rock," *Orion Magazine*, December 2017, <https://orionmagazine.org/article/women-standing-rock/>.

conservation activist and pop-folk music star John Denver teamed up with the Wildlife Conservation Society to celebrate the 100th year of the organization's efforts. This was in the form of a two-disc album and a live concert airing on the A&E network. In his music, and specifically on the album "John Denver: The Wildlife Concert," Denver sang about the beauty of nature and the connections humans have with the wilderness. In his song "Rocky Mountain High" he celebrates the beauty of the mountainous location with lines like "I've seen it rain and fire in the sky,"²⁰ painting a vivid picture of dramatic landscapes and enforcing this wildness with soulful guitar and smooth vocals. He talks about the character in the song not understanding humanity's destruction of the natural environment. He defines the human impact as "scars across the land," personifying the destruction and making it more relatable to the human experience. In his song "Eagles and Horses" he compares his own body, mind and soul to that of wild eagles and horses, claiming in one stanza that "My body is merely the shell of my soul, but the flesh must be given its due. Like a pony that carries its master back home, like an old friend that's tried and been true. My spirit will never be broken or caught for the soul is a free-flying thing."²¹ This piece is a little more upbeat and energetic. It features dramatic string instruments, flutes and a pounding drum beat, seeming to echo the sounds of traditional Native American music. His art ties together man and nature in a way that promotes a positive and healthy relationship where we acknowledge our connections and codependence. He wants us to have a conscious about our actions and focus on recognizing the beautiful and stunning natural world in which we live.

²⁰ "The Wildlife Concert (2 Disc)," John Denver, 1995, Rocky Mountain High.

²¹ "The Wildlife Concert (2 Disc)," John Denver, 1995, Eagles and Horses.

When I started my exploration of environmental advertisements, rather than traditionally defined fine arts, I found the most popular example was the “Crying Indian” commercial that aired on Earth Day in 1971. It is renowned as being one of “the best-known public service announcements ever”²² and its YouTube video comments are full of people praising it as an icon. Prior to investigating, I too thought this advertisement was wonderful. It depicts a Native American rowing his boat past polluting factories. He pulls up to a garbage strewn shoreline and stands looking at a highway scattered with litter. The Native American man says, “Some people have a deep, abiding respect for the natural beauty that was once this country and some people don’t,”²³ as a bag of trash is thrown from a moving car and scatters at his feet. He looks at the camera as a tear rolls down his face and a narrator’s voice states “People start pollution. People can stop it.”²⁴ At face value it seems to be a quality advertisement instructing Americans to be more conscious about their waste and its disposal. After reading Ginger Strand’s article in Orion magazine my thoughts are much different. Strand describes the ad as a fraud and explains that the crying Indian was “neither crying, nor Indian,”²⁵ but that he was an Italian-American Hollywood actor. This is not the biggest fraudulent part of the ad though. The major deception lies within the sponsors and creators of the advertisement. The ad was created and run by the Keep America Beautiful group; “a front group for the beer bottlers, can companies, and soda makers”²⁶ who are the ones responsible for the material being littered in the first place.

²² Ginger Strand, “The Crying Indian” (2008).

²³ Keep America Beautiful, “The Crying Indian.” Advertisement, April 22, 1971.

²⁴ Keep America Beautiful, “The Crying Indian.” Advertisement, April 22, 1971.

²⁵ Ginger Strand, “The Crying Indian” (2008).

²⁶ Ginger Strand, “The Crying Indian” (2008).

This discovery is a little unnerving. It exploits one of the main problems in our society. Even as a well-educated and environmentally conscious person, I too had been tricked by corporate companies attempting to cover up their environmentally unsustainable actions. Unfortunately, this dishonesty and greenwashing²⁷ is common practice around the world. One public relations company that had a hand in the creation of the Crying Indian was Burson-Marsteller. This PR firm appears in lots of campaigns²⁸ in the American history where their goal is to help repair companies and client's environmental images regardless of the horrific actions that have occurred and may continue to occur. This advertisement exemplifies the depth of our society's sustainability issue, but also enforces the power of an image. This short commercial has the majority of America thinking about a crying Indian and convinced that if they dispose of their trash responsibly then they are living sustainably when it will take much more than this to save our planet.

Following the "Crying Indian" in thread of cinematography, Ocean Preservation Society is one of the contemporary groups that really inspired me to pursue this project. Their motives seem much more genuine and truthful. The homepage of their website states "WE ARE OPS; A team of passionate artists, activist and change agents committed to sustainability and the preservation of our oceans and the plants."²⁹ Currently this organization has worked on and collaborated to create the documentaries "The Cove," "Chasing Coral," "Chasing Ice," and

²⁷ Greenwashing is when a company makes an effort to appear more "green" in their marketing and advertisement, but, do not implement such values in their business practices.

²⁸ They are the minds behind crisis management for the reactor building company of the Three Mile Island incident as well as the BP oil spill in 2010.

²⁹ Homepage, 2015, <http://www.opsociety.org/>.

“Racing Extinction.” These documentaries educate the viewers about various issues within the topic of environmentalism. “Chasing Coral” was the first of their projects I watched. It is available on Netflix, making it an extremely accessible piece of information for many people. The film investigates the destruction and death of coral reefs around the globe. One of the scenes that really inspired my thesis depicted the divers coming out of the water after witnessing the devastating destruction of the Lizard Island portion of the Great Barrier Reef, the world biggest coral reef that was historically gorgeous and lively. One of the diver’s surfaces and exits the water by way of a floating restaurant where people are dancing and drinking. The diver explains that it was depressing that these people were completely unaware of the graveyard that lay below them. This infuriated and saddened the scientists and divers in the film, as well as sparked something within me. This is a problem I see often in my daily life; people do not seem to be aware of reality. Everyday students, and people everywhere, step over trash lying on the ground, use disposable plastic containers and drive their cars short distances for the sake of convenience. Just like those people partying only meters above a destroyed marine community, society lives in blissful ignorance about what lies beneath them.

Building on the Work of Others

When constructing this show I was careful to consider how I could add to the great many works that came before me. I looked at the artists I researched and tried to learn from, and incorporate, their methods. From Mary Frank’s scribbled notes, I pulled the fractured thought “to make a narrative between the artist, the piece, the viewers and hopefully there is conversation between the paintings - this allows for a rich, intimate and expansive space.”³⁰ I thought about

³⁰ Mary Frank, Judy Collischan, and Linda Nochlin, *Mary Frank: Encounters* (Purchase, NY: Neuberger Museum, 2000), 8.

this concept of communication a lot because I think this is what it comes down to when creating art that is effective. Not just effective in the sense of inspiring contemplation and motivation to make a change, but also in the general sense that the way in which I communicate with the pieces I create must also translate to how my viewers interact with my work. Frank's work in triptychs inspired my own design. I want my photographs to work as singular images, as three specific groups and as a whole. I strove for art that was a cohesive group that communicated the mass amount of issues I found prominently active in the Salisbury University student culture and geographical location. These considerations about communications are also what lead me to title my pieces in the way in which I did. The titles of each piece help further define the visual message.

In the same way that Frank's philosophy or communications inspired me, I found the Sierra Club's Coffee Book method of displaying nature as a glorious vast concept, particularly helpful. I chose to feature this method in three images in the marine environments grouping, but also used beauty as a way of catching the audience's attention. Historically people respond to the beauty of nature, but to me it was not enough to just display its beauty. To me, it seems that these coffee table books were missing the next step. Yes, they got people talking about how beautiful these spaces are and how we need to protect them, but there is still a dissociation of the human connection to the environment. This is where I was influenced by the poetry of Diaz and Erdrich, as well as the music of John Denver. Their mediums of communication used personal connections to bridge the gaps that Frank spoke about between the artist, the art and the viewers. They created something that was based on their personal experiences but turned into something that was personal for others. I am interested in the importance these personal connections are to viewers. Therefore, I chose to include the grouping of images dedicated to pictorial subjects

familiar to the greater Salisbury University student population. I attempted to give this group of people something with which they can personally connect. By specifying that these big issues, talked about by activist groups and our government every day, are literally present in our personal environments it gives more motivation to people of that community to change their ways or get involved. It is not enough to see a beautiful place halfway across the country, but it takes highlighting the same beauty and issues within one's home to better motivate change. Like the OPS organization, I would like to utilize my creative talents to encourage others to live sustainable lives and be educated about our earth.

The first of the three groups of photographs (fig. 1-5) contain images focused on recognizable campus-related subjects. *No Parking* displays the light trails of cars moving around the full parking lot in front of the Academic Commons building. This is meant to signify the number of personal vehicles used instead of public transportation, walking or biking. *Shopping Spree* shows a laptop with a pile of credit and debit cards. This image tells the story of overconsuming products and ordering items online instead of shopping locally or buying preowned items. *Disposable* was taken in a Salisbury University classroom, but its focus lies not on the classroom, but instead on the single-use plastic water bottle. The classroom gives it context, but the focus on the plastic bottles highlights the issue of single-use plastics on campus. Bringing your own reusable water bottle or coffee mug is an easy fix for eliminating some of the single-use plastic waste. *Left the Lights On* shows the amount of electricity used just by the lighting in the dorms. It suggests that people should be conscious about their electricity usage even when they are not personally getting the electric bill. *Leftovers* displays the large amounts of food that students waste in the Commons Dining area. The University has made efforts to

reduce its ecological impact, but the students continue to throw away entire uneaten meals. This is fixed rather simply by taking less food and eating all the food you take.

The second group of images (fig. 6-10) depicts the connection of the first group to the greater community of the Eastern Shore. *Styrofoam Killer* highlights the way a staple of many people's morning routine, coffee in a Styrofoam cup, can end up harming our environment. Styrofoam is a non-biodegradable material and can be easily replaced by a reusable container. *Stained* highlights the general issue with runoff pollution. Chemicals and substances end up on the pavements of the many roads and parking lots and then make their way directly into the Chesapeake Bay by way of runoff. *The Morning After* relates heavily to *Stained* because this is the path the polluted runoff takes, but it is really meant to show that all over the Chesapeake Bay Watershed are drains that have the same thing written on them. Many drains lead to the same bay area. The red Solo cup also relates this photograph to the party culture of college students, a particular area in which waste production is rarely considered. *Power* presents a unique view of the power lines located in Pemberton Historical Park. Alerting people that the small light switch you flick on and off each day is related to these huge humming metal structures that crisscross the United States. *Plastic for Dinner* was one of the most difficult images to take for me personally. Landfills are horrible places to visit and often people talk about the detrimental ground pollution and methane release, but less prominently discussed is the animals feasting on the trash. When you throw out that plastic wrapper or bottle you do not think about it ending up in a giant landfill, and you especially do not think about a seagull accidentally eating it for dinner.

My third group of photographs (fig. 11-15) consists of images relating to the marine environments of the Chesapeake Bay Watershed. *Rise and Shine* shows the breathtaking beauty

of nature's sunrise over the marsh of the Deal Island Wildlife Management Area. Sunrises signify the beginning of a day and an ongoing cycle. *Filters* offers the beauty of the oysters living in the Chesapeake Bay. These creatures naturally filter the bay and keep it habitable for many other species. They are being threatened by many of the topics displayed in the other two groups of images. *Watch Your Step* was taken at Cove Beach Park, a place where people often bring their dogs. The shattered glass bottle bottom presents an image that is a little bit frightening because it seems to be easily stepped upon and has been narrowly missed by the remaining paw print of the dog. This makes the viewer see that pollution is not just an unseen threat, but also a very tangible one. *Too Quiet* is another photograph that displays the beauty and serenity of a marine environment. This image was taken at Jane's Island State Park and encourages the viewer to feel at peace when imagining being in this pristine, still place. *Breeze on the Point* celebrates the sunset at Roaring Point Park. The sunset is both beautiful and a signification of the end of one day. It transfers the viewer back to the sunrise and emphasizes the importance of being aware that life is an ongoing cycle.

I strove to make sure these three groups were easily discernable and truly displayed the connections between all three areas, that people often overlook. Actions and environments are connected, we are all connected. We are all beings on this earth, therefore we all have a responsibility to keep life sustainable. In an obvious sense, the plastic water bottles being used relate to the plastic cup entering the Chesapeake Bay storm drain which relates to the trash found on the beaches. In a less obvious sense there are also unseen connections that are harder to visually spell out like the effects of polluted run-off on aquatic plant populations. Instead I chose to really convey the relationships of everything. If we are all connected, then we are all part of

the problem. This is not a concept that I want people to see as depressing, but rather inspiring. If we are all part of the problem, then we should all be part of the solution.

Logistics of the Gallery Exhibition

My primary gallery showing took place at Gallery 303, within the Salisbury University Student Art Center. It was on display following Earth Day weekend, from April 24th through May 4th. My reception was held on May 3rd from 3-5pm. I chose to use a less impactful, and cheaper, display option for my gallery show. Instead of framing my pieces in the traditional sleek black frames with pristine glass and expensive mat board, I chose to design my own display. I eliminated the frames and glass but kept the mat board. I used 15 pieces of 14-inch by 16-inch 8 ply mat board. Each piece of mat board was then attached to an 8 by 10-inch rectangular wood structure. The wood used was repurposed from a local neighbor's deconstructed porch. This means that I spent no money on wood materials, used repurposed or recycled products and prevented some material from entering the local landfill. I also cut all the wood with a hand saw, eliminating the use of electricity for cutting. My hanging method further eliminated materials traditionally used to hang photographs, as it does not require wires or hooks and instead required only two nails per piece. Using wood glue, I attached the wooden structures to the back of each piece of mat board. This system allowed the mat board surface to hang away from the wall a bit as to give it a dramatic "float" effect. On the front of the mat board, I mounted my 15 printed photographs. My photographs were printed in Salisbury University's Conway Hall digital printing lab. My only other purchase relating the display of the show was a box of nails from the local hardware store, promotion posters (fig. 21) and vinyl stickers. Funding for this project was obtained through the Salisbury University Green Fund Grant. This is a grant "designed to

improve the environmental sustainability at SU by providing funding for student and faculty driven projects in order to positively impact the social and economic atmosphere.”³¹

I also chose to include a table and small display in the gallery space. This section provided information for attendees about how they can take the next step and get involved with being more sustainable. This involvement could be a personal change in behavior, a donation to an organization or committing to a volunteer effort in the community. On the table were the stickers I designed, a laptop and a mason jar for donations towards the Chesapeake Bay Program. The vinyl stickers (fig. 24) feature a design consisting of a plastic water bottle floating in water with the words “Consume Less – Know More” surrounding it. I chose to include stickers in my show to both provide incentive to donate to the CBP and for attendees to use as a display of their connection. This sticker is a way of showing solidarity in the movement towards living more sustainably. I also featured three environmentalists, or activism, groups because I wanted to make the information easily available to viewers, so they can take the next step.

The first group I chose to feature in my information section was displayed on my laptop. It is a new program designed by clothing and outdoor gear company Patagonia called Patagonia Action Works. This site allows users to sign up, type in their zip code and choose specific topics in which they are interested. There is also an option to not sign up and instead just entering your zip code, making it even easier for individuals to get involved. The categories of possible interest include things like “biodiversity, climate, communities, land and water.”³² After filling out these

³¹ "Salisbury University Green Fund," Salisbury University - Academics @ SU - Academics @ SU, 2018, http://www.salisbury.edu/sustain/programs/green_fund/.

³² "Connect with Environmental Action Groups," Patagonia Action Works, accessed March 2, 2018, <https://www.patagonia.com/actionworks/#!/explore/home?bounds=39.8589,-76.1153,41.6932,-73.4511&er=40.782411,-74.783182&zoom=8>.

three simple steps, the program searches its network to find petitions, groups and events that correlate with what you suggested were your interests. From there you can click through the results and sign up for items directly through the site. This website is a personal favorite because it allows people to find groups, or activities, of which they might not have otherwise been aware. It really helps streamline the process of getting people involved with environmentalist and sustainability actions in their communities.

The second and third groups I chose to feature were Salisbury University's Sustainability website and the CBP's webpage How-To's and tips. From the bounty of information found on these two sites, I pulled titles relevant to University students; "In Your Backyard, Driving, Consumption Practices, On Campus, In Your Home," and "When You Eat."³³ This information was used to construct two posters (fig. 22 & 23) featuring scan-able QR codes that lead to the respective webpages overlaid across one of my photos. By using titles, I alerted the students to possible relevant information, but encouraged them to research the information themselves, thus promoting self-education and awareness. These were hung above, on either side, of the laptop.

Also, on display, in a frame purchased from a local thrift store was my artist statement. It read as follows:

"We do not usually spend time thinking about how our daily actions impact our planet. We don't think about the trash we create when we buy a plastic wrapped breakfast sandwich because we got up too late to make our own. We don't think about the bird's whose' stomachs are full of bottle caps when we drink out of plastic water bottles because we prefer it over tap water. We don't think about the acres of plastic floating in the oceans when we step over the

³³ "How-To's and Tips," Chesapeake Bay Program, <https://www.chesapeakebay.net/action/howtotips/> and "Get Your Green On!" Salisbury University - Sustainability @ SU - Sustainability Resources - Sustainability @ SU, <http://www.salisbury.edu/sustain/resources/getyourgreenon.html>.

wrappers laying on the side walk because we're too busy to pick it up. And we are especially not thinking about our carbon emissions, or polluted runoff, when we drive to class instead of biking five minutes down the road because driving is more convenient. Instead we spend our time posting on our Instagram's about how beautiful the beach is, or tweeting about how fantastic the weather was, completely missing the ongoing relations between our actions and the natural world.

Maybe it is a lack of knowledge, or maybe it is that people just don't care, but eventually everyone needs to realize that if you live on this earth, you are part of a massive web of connections. If you are part of these connections then you may be part of the problem, but the good news is you can easily be part of the solution. Your actions matter, especially when it comes to confronting our society's leaders, government and corporations who are perpetuating unsustainable trends. We need people like you, the one reading this, to go beyond changing your own habits. My hope is that this show helps clarify a small fraction of our connections to the earth and inspires you to ask questions, speak out about issues, educate those around you, and encourage your community to make a change.

A poem by Louise Erdrich, called *Advice to Myself #2: Resistance*, guided my thoughts during this project and serves as a daily reminder to be more conscientious. The following is an excerpt from her poem that I hope helps others as well:

Resist the thought that you are alone.
Resist turning your back on the knife
of the world's sorrow,

resist turning that knife upon yourself.

Resist your disappearance

into sentimental monikers,

into the violent pattern of corporate logos,

into the mouth of the unholy flower of consumerism.

Resist being consumed.

Resist your disappearance

into anything except

the face you had before you walked up to the podium.

Resist all funding sources but accept all money.

Cut the strings and dismantle the web

that needing money throws over you.

Resist the distractions of excess.

Wear old clothes and avoid chain restaurants.

Resist your genius and your own significance

as declared by others.

Resist all hint of glory but accept the accolade

as tributes to your double.

Walk away in your unpurchased skin.

Resist the millionth purchase and go backward.

Get rid of everything.

If you exist, then you are loved
by existence. What do you need?"³⁴

Reflections

The inspiration for this project started with an internet meme joking about Keith Richards'³⁵ immortality and transitioned into an exploration of serious issues within today's society. Now the question is what happens next? For me there is no definitive end in sight. It seems possible that this set of images is applicable to a larger population. I would like to explore taking these images and sharing them with people outside the SU population. Possibly other academic institutions located in the Bay area, or even school and universities near other bodies of water. Although it is designed to appeal to SU students, the project's theme addresses broader concepts affecting anyone near a body of water and are relevant to essentially everyone living on this earth. There is also the option of following in the footsteps of the Sierra Club and turning these images into a book whose proceeds could go towards supporting a conservation organization. It seems rather open ended when considering what happens next with this set of images, but the efforts and motivations behind the concept will not cease to be spoken about and taught to others. Reducing our consumption, living more sustainably, being more aware of our actions impacts and educating others are all notions that extend beyond the confines of my gallery exhibition. My images should serve as an inspiration that encourages further consideration.

³⁴ Lousie Erdrich and Layli Long Soldier, "Women and Standing Rock," *Orion Magazine*, December 2017, <https://orionmagazine.org/article/women-standing-rock/>.

³⁵ Guitarist and founding member of the band the Rolling Stones.

I learned from this exploration, that our environmental crisis is indeed related to individual's actions but is also largely related to the structure of the society in which we live. Finis Dunaway, author of "Seeing Green" and "Natural Visions," writes about the power and use of images in an environmental context. In "Seeing Green" he discusses the writing of Leo Marx and his thoughts on the deep seeded societal issues that affect our environment. "Too often, Marx argued, media outlets promulgated the idea "that ecological problems are in essence technological, not political, and therefore easier to solve than the problems of racism, war or imperialism."³⁶ This means that in our society we are taught that it is the physical items that are the problems, but the root of the matter lies within a more political³⁷ issue. Marx points out that most of the campaigns and efforts made toward improving our sustainability and living a "greener" life is cosmetic and do not really reach the deeper issue. I agree with his assessment that these efforts are not in vain, it is still important to make these personal "cosmetic" efforts, but we still need to make a better effort to change the culture. Marx calls this area of society "the deeply entrenched, institutionalized character of the collective behavior"³⁸ and this is what needs to change to save not only our marine environments, but our planet in general.

It is not enough to individually lead a "green life" but one must also press politicians and corporate companies to change their ways as well. Our society is structured so that we are taught to consume in excess, without regard for the consequences. Environmental issues relate heavily

³⁶ Finis Dunaway, *Seeing green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 96.

³⁷ I use political in this sense not only to describe American governmental politics, but also the politics of social interaction, community interactions and societal structure.

³⁸ Finis Dunway, *Seeing green: The Use and Abuse of American Environmental Images* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2015), 96.

to this consumerist attitude. These are not just personal habits that can be changed, and everything will be solved. These are actions based on societal values, which are much harder to change. Getting involved with organized groups working to encourage companies to take more responsibility for their business practices or voting to elect politicians that display regard towards preserving and protecting the environment are two simple ways people can go further than just changing their own habits. It starts with the individual and moves up from there until a change is made. At minimum, I wanted the viewers of my show to become more aware of their actions. I did not want the students of Salisbury University to be like the people partying on that floating restaurant above a decimated natural beauty. I want them to realize what is under them before it becomes a graveyard.

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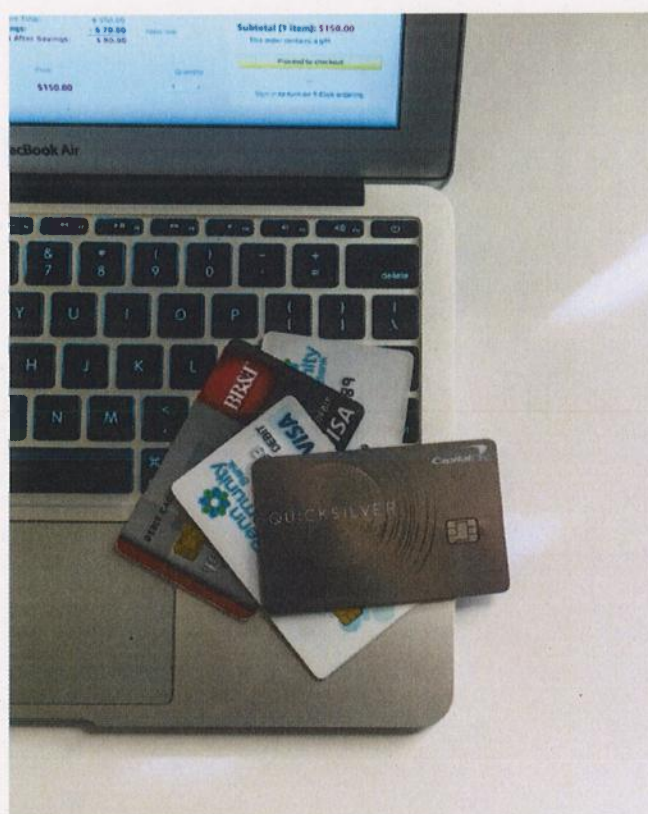
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Campus Related Images (fig. 1-5)*No Parking**Shopping Spree*



Disposable



Left the Lights On



Leftovers

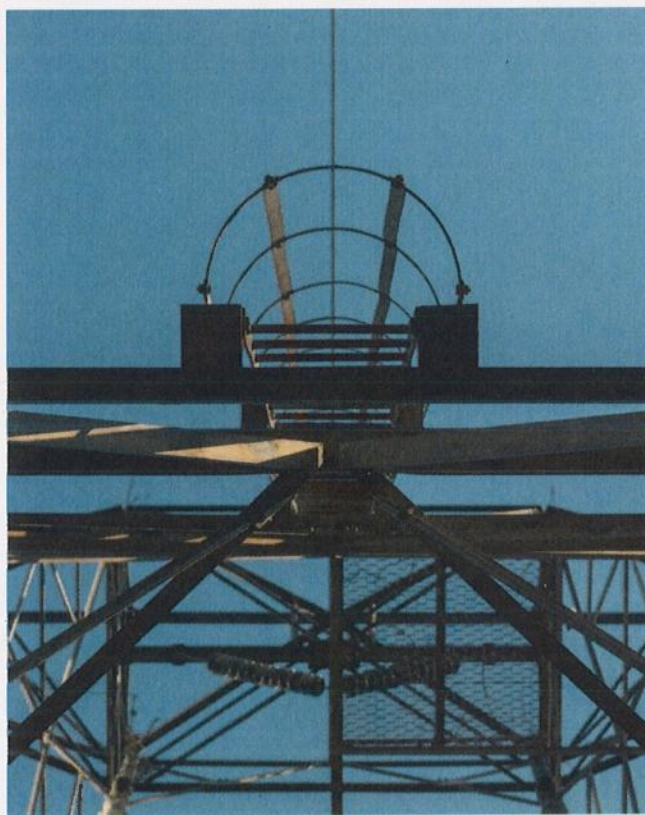
Greater Salisbury Community Realited Images (fig. 6-10)



Styrofoam Killer



The Morning After



Power



Stained



Plastic for Dinner

Marine Environment Related Images (fig. 11-15)



Rise and Shine



Filters



Too Quiet



Watch Your Step



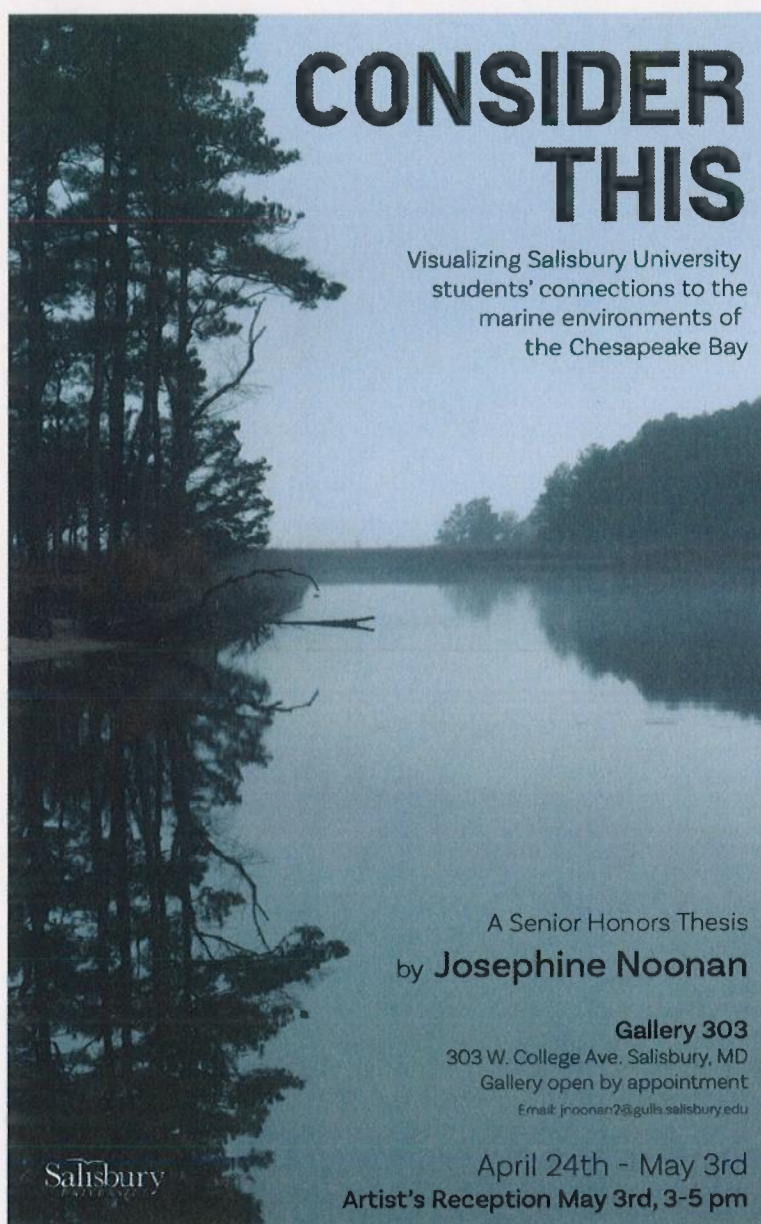
Breeze on the Point

Gallery Display (fig.16-20)





Promotional Poster (fig. 21)



Informational Poster – Promoting Salisbury University’s Sustainability “Get Your Green On” Webpage (fig. 22), Promoting the Chesapeake Bay Program’s “How-To’s and Tips” Webpage (fig. 23)



Fig. 16



Fig. 17

Sticker (fig. 24)

