
Senior Projects Spring 2018


Bard Undergraduate Senior Projects

Spring 2018

Discovering Wonders and Tragedies

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Recommended Citation

Wardell, MacKenzie Sayre Josephine, "Discovering Wonders and Tragedies" (2018). *Senior Projects Spring 2018*. 369.

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Discovering Wonders and Tragedies

A Senior Project submitted to
The Division of the Arts
Of Bard College

By
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Annandale-On-Hudson, NY
May 2018

Discovering wonders of the weather and the ever changing plant life in the Northeast, and tragedies about how disrespectful and selfish humans are towards the environment; My senior project is showing my viewers how exciting the natural world is and how necessary it is to recognize the destructiveness of plastic and our single-use culture.

During this past year, I've spent my time collecting from, observing, and recreating the natural world. I've experimented with new mediums such as cyanotype printing, which is brought to life by exposure to sunlight, and I've delved into my curiosities about the world of trash and what happens after our garbage is thrown away. At the beginning of my project I focused on light and shadows of natural forms which helped me explore my interest in shapes. Then I visited my mom in Florida in January. Every day my mom, brother, and I walked along the beach and saw hundreds of tiny pieces of plastic scattered in the sand. At first, I was angry and picked up some of the plastic and wondered what I could do with it. But after a couple days of collecting and being frustrated with humanity, my emotions faded. I left Florida and these plastic memories behind.

While flying back from Florida I drew clouds from the plane. I was able to simply draw. From the small pieces I created I was inspired to make larger graphite drawings for my senior project. Mostly because I love clouds but also because they're a reflection of humanity's treatment of the planet and collect CO₂ emissions just like the ocean. (Maybe they're also a representation of my emotional state, but I'm not sure yet.)

When I got back to Bard I continued printing leaves on cyanotypes and drawing clouds. I also attended an artist talk with Les Levine. He conducted a conversation with volunteers from the audience and my advisor, Ellen, was one of the last people to volunteer. She talked about her anger towards the current presidency and her efforts in getting people registered to vote but to no avail. She asked Les if the times are changing, if she should just give up, and Les looked at her and said something along the lines of, *I think you should*. That day I had cleaned up a pizza box and multiple bottles off the ground and a driver in front of me threw a cigarette out their car window! I remembered the plastic covered beach and after seeing Ellen just say *okay* to Les' ending remark I was fuming, I yelled, babbled at my friends, roommates, and my dad! I want to do something to change the current horrors of our world! GODDAMNIT.

Then the snow started melting and pieces of trash were uncovered all over campus. I decided to collect litter on three different days and use what I had gathered to make cyanotypes. I also gathered used plastic utensils at Manor from one meal to express how wasteful a single night in our dining facilities can be. Although it's hard for me to be hopeful about the way people treat our earth, I made roughly attached collages of printed plastics and printed ferns and leaves to express the idea that things *could* change.

Throughout my whole process, I've wanted my final product to be something I enjoy looking at. This has been very difficult to follow through with because I am working with trash and when trash is found in the woods, or in an animal's body it is anything but beautiful. By keeping my art as something which I consider to be beautiful, it is a reflection of how people and myself deal with the tragedies in the world, we close our eyes to it and turn our heads, we act as if we can't see it. In the future, through my art and daily practice I'm going to push against the tendency for us humans to be passive about environmental destruction.





