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Myelination: A Plastic Religion

Cody A. Thomas

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MYELINATION: A PLASTIC RELIGION

by

CODY A. THOMAS

(Under the Direction of Jeff P. Garland)

ABSTRACT

Plastic products are convenient, abundant and our use of them has become routine. This acceptance of plastics' presence has become a dogma that most humans adhere to. The continual consumption of these single-use plastics in our daily lives has unknowingly shaped our environmental consciousness, behaviors, and justification for them. This belief in plastics function has been strategically developed by companies that rely on our behaviors to distribute their products. Humans have become the faithful consumers of these goods and this belief. The brain and its ability to remain plastic and develop decision-making skills are known as Myelination. New experiences enhance this neurological function and strengthen our reasoning skills. Everyone knows that plastics are bad for the environment, however, they still take advantage of their conveniences. Experiencing my kitsch work shifts the postmodern narratives around recycling and presents it in an altered state that does not immediately read as plastic. This aesthetic experience can shift the mindset on sustainability and how we think of our plastics to generate a responsibility toward being good stewards of the earth.

INDEX WORDS: Myelination, Recycle, Single-use, Plastic, Color, Experience, Kitsch, Postmodern, Sustainability, Aesthetics, Consumption, Environmental, Convenience, Consciousness, Earth

MYELINATION: A PLASTIC RELIGION

by

CODY A. THOMAS

B.A., Illinois College, 2018

M.F.A., Georgia Southern University, 2021

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of Georgia Southern University

in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

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CODY A. THOMAS

Major Professor:
Committee:

Jeff P. Garland
Jason Hoelscher
Jason Murdock

Electronic Version Approved:
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DEDICATION

In the hope for positive changes in protecting and preserving our environment, to live a happy and healthier life for all animals.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, my parents (Craig and Connie Thomas) thank you for being supportive of me to move 14 hours away to continue my education and get my terminal degree. Once arriving at Georgia Southern I was welcomed by faculty and staff of the Betty Foy Sanders Department of Art and instantly felt I had people to help me achieve my goals. Those who went out of their way to help me were Kim Riner, Marc Moulton, Jason Hoelscher, Cindy Epps, Tiffine Townsend, Robert Farber, Casey Stoddard, John Jenson, Jason Murdock, and Jon Witzky. Nik James thank you for completely getting me through the first few months and answering my many questions. Before moving here I had been through a life-changing event where I was unsure how to navigate further. All of my classmates brought joy and inspiration in moving forward.

He needs a line of his own to thank him, Jason McCoy.

Thank you to Jeff for believing in me more than I do. Completely going on this journey with me in undergraduate and now through graduate. Thank you to Kim for accepting me into your home and dealing with me. Also to the two who were always excited when I came home, Zella, and the late Astro. You two mean so much to me and helped me through a tough time. Skylinn, make sure to wear your seatbelt.

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Finally, thank you my classmates for this journey and inspiration. I could not have completed this without you. Please remember to Reduce, Reuse, Recycle, and Refuse!

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: INTENTION

We desire convenience and low cost, which makes trash an afterthought. With plastics, we are unable to refuse to consume them. This convenience and reliance on plastic make it almost impossible to give up. This is why I chose recycled plastics as a medium. Removing plastics that cannot be easily recycled and minimizing their continued impact on our environment has been a driving force in my work for the past several years. My goal is that the viewer becomes aesthetically aware of the inherent beauty of plastics and this experience can invoke an action for change. Plastics' inherent qualities of color, texture and archival longevity are no different than any artistic medium. The vibrant colors are used as a marketing strategy to gain the attention of consumers for consumption and the texture and longevity are from the chemical structure of polymers. These chemical structures have allowed plastics to feed the everyday single-use consumer culture. Our food, water, medicine, and other necessary goods are all packaged to create convenience for our standards of daily living. This overconsumption of plastic in my own life continues to inspire my work.

My artworks are transforming previously consumed plastics from being tossed away into being an aesthetic experience. The intention is to create artifacts that can be cherished for generations. Like plastics, home decor is continually being consumed by individuals. Unlike single-use plastics, these artworks create a decorative piece and generate conversation. They can become part of a family's history and be passed down from one generation to the next to mirror a non-biodegradable plastic's impact on society. My work takes advantage of this longevity to create a lasting awareness between the viewer and the decorative artifact's plasticity.

This is just one of many ways for developing new ideas to prevent a throw-away culture. This throw-away culture bleeds into our natural environment and ends up trapped in our landfills and suffocating our oceans. The reality is that the Earth continues to be trashed, destroying what was given to us. The planet needs us to take care of and be good stewards for its continued health. Transforming

recycled plastic and salvaged artifacts into desirable items again, places what was once trash back into the consumer culture pipeline as a positive solution to the growing crisis. Focusing on preventing plastics from ending up in our environment will help hold good stewards' beliefs and a desire for change. This will prevent them from being tossed into the trash, enhancing aesthetic appeal, deepening the meaning with religious iconography, and facilitating a call to action from the public.

Upon arrival at Georgia Southern University, I was surprised to learn that the campus had no recycling program. This convenience to recycle our waste was an assumption I had about populous urban areas needing to reduce their waste. Being unable to recycle my plastics, I had to figure out what to do with them. The pile from my consumption grew as I was intending to recycle them somewhere close by. Even with a concerted effort to reduce my use of non-biodegradable and single-use plastics, my pile was still adding up substantially.

There was a desire to make conscious and responsible decisions when it came to recycling the plastic that is now in my ownership. This led to finding alternatives that could be completed by myself, or the people around me, rather than relying on someone else. The quantity of plastic collected sparked the idea to use it as a material for creating. It was an inexpensive material with many applications. A new approach was developed by my medium of recycled plastics. Many of the techniques in transforming the plastic into a new product required heavy machinery that was not common outside of a recycling center or for individual use. My research for a sustainable method of creating with plastic led to Georgia Southern's sustainability grants. My grant was accepted and funded to buy a plastic shredder, 3D printer, and a machine that can take small chips of plastic and turn them into 3D filament. My goal was to take the plastic collected, turn it into filament for the 3D printer, and then print something useful, or something that will not end up in the trash. This was to remove the plastic waste that the department creates from 3D printing and proposals for collecting other departments around campus. Ultimately creating a filament from everyday plastic waste and waste from the universities' 3D printers would come to the department never needing to purchase new filament.

The collection of these plastics grew larger than what was able to be used in the way intended. The amount collected, stored, and used led to the inability to use that much plastic, as the plastic was continuously being added daily. Finding other options was necessary to prevent the buildup of plastics. All plastics have a numbering system to signify their chemical compound. This unique numbering system for chemicals used in plastics helps in sorting the recyclables for the melting process. A troubling factor I found within my research is that plastics are not always marked with the correct number and that the numbers are almost meaningless. There is not a set system regulating the numbers, so plastic companies do not always label them correctly. The plastics all with the same number still had various chemical compositions where they all reacted differently when they were heated through the extruder. Preventing the creation of recycled 3D filament.

The challenge of being completely sustainable through recycling without the need for a virgin product was my intention, my dream, my message. We don't always have the option to refuse plastic because it covers many items that we need to have such as food or medications. There is no option to get our medications in a different container with the requirements of child safety lids. Food is in all sorts of different packaging, but there is no easy way to get all of your groceries without something being in plastic. This means being conscious of what is purchased becomes a universal responsibility because you never know where it will end up, but some options are easily recyclable or contain no plastic. Modern-day consumption makes this difficult. I do one of these options where the container that it comes in can be used for something else, like lunch meats that come in containers that can be used to store leftovers or other things. Still, not all could be upcycled as they were. They needed to be physically transformed so they could produce something new. If something new is going to be produced by me it has to be one hundred percent recycled materials. Materials that were tossed out to end up in landfills, or have been given one last chance at not ending up there.

Items that have one last chance before going to the landfill end up at second-hand stores. Normally this stuff donated is one's trash, but the trash is good enough for someone else to use. Needing to achieve the message, upcycling was necessary to obtain more content. Using old paintings, prints,

lamps, furniture, and so on was a way to visually develop my message. Upcycling created that opportunity, staying with my one hundred percent recycled work.

CHAPTER 2

ACTIVISM

The viewer is an important part of what goes out into the world after the artwork is unveiled. What message is received and what changes it could create might help in changing individuals' consumption rate, what they buy, when, and how much. This semiotic experience combined with our shared memories to recognize various colors of plastic from consumer products plays on our desire for nostalgia. You know the hues to lids of peanut butter, drinks, coffee containers, etc. Since we use them every day or at least see them every day, we start to memorize what a container looks like. The hue of a blue container can evoke memories of what certain brand of coffee it is, and you know that you have purchased it, but where did it go now? Realizing that what we toss is still ours, and evoking the memory of where my containers go. Was it recycled? Was it tossed in the trash? Was it saved to keep as a storage container? By leaving it in the artwork I want there to be a connection with what they are consuming and being conscious of that. Wanting a dramatic life change for the viewer is a lot to ask. Society in the United States loves the drive-thru. The New York Times published, "drive-thru sales represent 70% of fast-food sales which generates billions of dollars for the industry each month" (Yaffe-bellany, 2020). The recognizability of colors and shapes of the cups will tell you where they came from, or what kind of drink was in them. After viewing my work, the chance is higher to now pass on getting a drive-thru drink creating one less cup, lid, and straw could create a chain reaction.

Options are available if there is a want to take the initiative for change. The power that we have with our purchases can make a difference. Purchasing only items that are known to be created sustainably, and having an environmentally conscious mind, to create a safe and healthy future. R. G. Collingwood states "The best art, the art that really matters, is the stuff that changes the way we interact with the world" (Green, 2016).

The impact is not just on the environment, but also on affecting us and our bodily functions. There is high toxicity with chemical leaching from the types of plastics we use and the microplastics that

it will break down into. This affects the human body in negative ways that should be a cause for concern, but the artwork emphasizes what it is doing to our natural environment which we use to achieve food for human consumption. If the world knew where the plastic comes from they would be disgusted, and question safety for its use around food. The plastics are also being disposed of into the environment creating a detrimental clog in our natural systems. Having plastic be like an invasive species could completely devastate an entire ecosystem. Creating an annihilation of the ecosystem that it has invaded.

CHAPTER 3

THEORY

Environmental and ecological aesthetics are artistic developments with the earth's care in mind. Having a designed area where the natural order is not destroyed, or once something is changed there will not be devastating effects to the surrounding environment becomes the driving force behind the artwork. Art creates conversations about ecological and social issues. "Aesthetics have responses to natural objects, including landscapes, that find expression in the language of the beautiful and the ugly. The contemporary discipline of aesthetics incorporates three approaches: the study of the aesthetic concepts, the study of certain states of mind – responses, attitudes, emotions – that are held to be involved in aesthetic experience, and the study of the aesthetic object (Munro, 2013).

Artists use various forms, content, and contextualize them to generate this aesthetic and emotional experience. Landscapes are one of these forms that can create a familiar space that has the potential to go beyond the horizon line and evoke an emotional response. The horizontal line is a part of nature that is implemented to grasp the viewer with something they recognize. They can relate to something that is in their everyday life. Making a viewer aware of the landscape creates an understanding of the flow and function of that ecological system. This awareness helps the viewer visualize the natural cycles of life and forces that are acting upon that environment. Natural cycles such as water come from a higher elevation and flow down. This will end up either as groundwater or standing water like an ocean, or lake. They will proceed to evaporate back into the air or be consumed by a plant or animal. Human activities continue to interrupt how these cycles function in the way they once did. This "new cycle" has dramatically altered our environment's natural balance.

We desire to keep a balance in natural systems, yet we are constantly polluting these systems where they are not able to function as they did before anthropogenic occurrences. The excessive amounts of plastic that are put into the water systems is not a political exaggeration. Many third-world countries have completely polluted water systems where all you see is plastic floating on the water. Many of these countries accept or have accepted plastics from all over the world. The issue is that single-use plastics are

being used and discarded and companies are not able to keep up with amounts that are being shipped in. This leads to the creation of piles of plastics, which then will be carried off by wind and other natural occurrences into the ecosystem.

“Another mixed biological-cultural *ecological aesthetics* theory by A. Carlson and P. H. Gobster links preferences for landscape with ethics, suggesting a preference for ecologically sound landscapes (Tveit *et al.*, 2006). A. Jorgensen (2011) has also expressed a similar view. This theory sees landscape preferences from an ethical perspective: if a landscape is known to be ecologically healthy then it will be preferred. According to J. Kamičaitytė-Virbašienė (2003), a similar approach dominates in landscape valuation in Lithuania: the intensity of human impact is seen as inversely proportional to landscape’s aesthetic quality, and the most natural landscapes are seen as the most scenic. However, such an approach applies only to specific categories of the landscape” (Zaleskienė*, 2014).



(Figure 1: Monet’s *Water*

Lilies)

What was once a beautiful landscape of Monet’s *Water Lilies*, seen to be a beautiful scenic landscape is now covered in plastic. Altered, is a new beauty to the painting at first glance. When you find out more than the painting is a copy of *Water Lilies*, you begin to see the truth. What is beautiful is a modern update to the

global crisis overconsumption of plastics.

CHAPTER 4

THEORY CONT: KITSCH

To create something to be desirable, it has to have a large group of interested individuals. Having a cult following of anything provides an expansion of the awareness of its existence. People will follow on the bandwagon of highly sought-after items to keep themselves relevant to the times. Many desirable items go through phases where they go in and out of popularity. The goal is not to make something desirable for a season but a reason. A reason that will be for the better of the world and the betterment of humanity. 'Doing our part' has always been a continuous trend. We are not able to keep this true to ourselves. There always have to be reminders of what we should complete each day. The artwork displays a daily reminder to progress on eliminating plastic from our lives. Just as if it was a quote, on things that you should remember.



(Figure 2: *'Breath of Spring'*) *'Breath of Spring'* offers a reminder of where all of our plastic is going. Taking that image in your mind every day to prevent that from happening. The theory of human desirability of an ecologically healthy landscape is missing. To keep great landscapes, there must be nothing unnatural throughout. Showing that *'Breath of Spring'* would increase the desire to make sure plastics don't end up in the environment.

The attraction of a consumer is needed for a product. Providing my work with attraction is an end goal in my work and for its longevity.

It's needed for someone to purchase the work

otherwise it's not going to be out telling its story. Kitsch is a part of art that is notably infamous. Yet my

work is not to be purchased by the few, but by many. The more who are purchasing the work are taking home plastic that will not end up in our ecosystem. The value is what will create the effect of not being tossed out. Creating a higher valued product will have fewer chances of being thrown away. There will be a value that they would like to receive back from it. The value could be a profit or the significance in the meaning. Items that don't hold meaning or a story are very easy to be thrown away. They can be dumped out of your life without any remembrance of it. Having a high value is what will keep items around in the human realm. More notably, having artwork that is widely understood for more than just who is in the art realm and creating where the message can be further successful in art activism. "As part of the development of modernist thought in art's relentless push forward during the first half of the twentieth century, the figurative depiction was eventually left behind, and with it the artistically uninformed viewer. Through this, art becomes mainly accessible to what Wartenberg (2002: xiii) calls the experts, a fraction of society made up of artists, academics, curators, art historians, art theoreticians, gallery owners, and the visually literate public. Therefore, as the avant-garde and Modernism gradually became increasingly abstract, so kitsch came to be identified not only as what was cheap and mass-produced in the nineteenth century, but also as that which did not reflect Modernism's ideal of order through abstraction. Through this categorization, social identity theory's concept of in-groups and outgroups is reflected" (Willem Venter, 2015). "Hilton Kramer talks about how "modernism is an object of worship, not a tool of experimentation; a weapon to employ against those who would probe, analyze, or otherwise demystify power" (Lazare, 2020).

The human realm has a desire for items that could or are categorized as kitsch. Noticing how society creates trends and desirability, kitsch is always what stays around and is successful in large quantities of purchasing. My art uses kitsch to the works' advantage to get out in the world and be seen, but also loved to a point where someone would want to purchase it and have it in their home. My ideas of removing plastic through artwork need the use of kitsch to become successful in their marketability and longevity of being kept for generations.

“The second half of the twentieth century (with notable changes in post-World War II society and the rise of consumer culture) saw the development of postmodern thought. As the term Postmodernism is problematic in itself, so too is a simple definition of postmodernist art (see Lyotard 1984; McHale 1991). Postmodernist thought, however, is seen to have dislodged itself from the absolute truths, ideologies, and hierarchical views of modernist art. Binkley (2000: 133) argues that the last decades of the twentieth century saw an end to the division of high culture and low culture, and also, debatably, an end to the division of art and kitsch. Kjellman- Chapin (2010: 27) counters this argument by stating that the use of the word kitsch has remained, seemingly, to refer to a known category. She (Kjellman-Chapin 2010: 28) poses the question as to how the category implied when the term kitsch is used would be defined, as the word recalls “a category of production that deliberately panders to popular tastes; [which] is considered illegitimate, insincere, inauthentic, and without redeeming aesthetic merit.” Kjellman-Chapin (2010: 27; 2013: ix) lists a variety of products that could be, and have been, labeled as kitsch. She names a spectrum of objects that range from garden gnomes and snow globes to original works of art (as well as reproductions of such works) by artists such as Jules Joseph Lefebvre (1834-1912) (figure 2). Comparing inexpensive, mass-produced items of an aesthetic nature with Lefebvre’s work, which has been criticized for being sentimental, Kjellman-Chapin (cf. 2010 & 2013) does not attempt to raise or lower the objects to the same level, but endeavors to illustrate the ambiguousness of the use of the term kitsch” (Willem Venter, 2015).

CHAPTER 5

THE WORK

Iconography is imaginary that has an underlying meaning. There is an understanding that can be pulled from each to understand what something is and means. Iconography was widely used in religious paintings to help the viewer interpret the meaning. Today iconography is everywhere we look, and we use it constantly. Having any topic you can pull out things that would resonate with it. Including iconography is important to my work because there is a meaning behind everything and it is important to get my message across to the viewer. I am also creating things that would resonate with people, something they would have a connection to. An object they would remember or could see themselves or a family member owning.

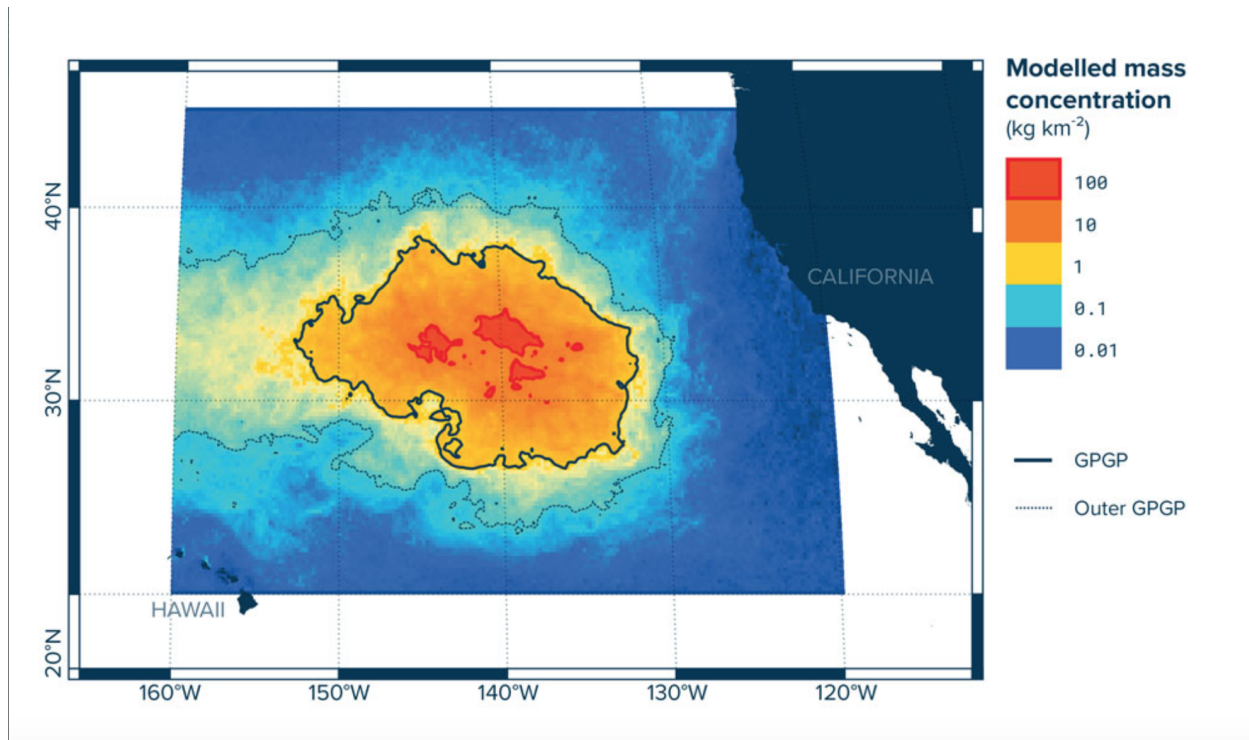
A great landscape resonates with people. If it did not, then we would have different decor paintings than we see today. “Environmental psychologist Louise Chawla argues that experiencing landscape as a place is valuable because it is sensory-rich, restorative, and character-forming. She examines autobiographical accounts to discover what types of places stay in our memory and inform who we are as adults. Chawla suggests that these places create *ecstatic memories* which sustain and delight us, and, as places remembered, are the landscapes that have been most intensely felt. Her work explores how these experiences are connected to people’s creative abilities, inspired by the strong correlation she found among artists, poets, and authors who wrote about ecstatic landscape experiences” (Giesecking, et al., 2014). A scene into something different, something beautiful, a place to escape. These landscapes in decor paintings are perfect, they are full of nature with little to no human interaction. A nice barn in a field of hay, or a coastal home right on the ocean’s edge. Paintings with no human interference at all are common in decor. These old decor prints are everywhere, and we all know someone with them or have them ourselves. They remind us of home or being at our grandparent’s house. They stay around until they pass on, and then they may run out of generations to pass down to so they are dumped. They are tossed in the trash or a thrift store donation. There is nothing that makes them special because there are millions more in the world. All that has come to be a waste with nothing special for people to want them again.

With my work, I'm creating them to be desirable kitsch again where they are given a second life and hope for the longevity of not ending up in the trash. The adaptations were created to give each one its uniqueness to be kept for the years to come. Each one is not only taking a painting out of the trash but solving issues with the overconsumption of plastics. The plastics are used like paint not only to resemble what is underneath them but to remove plastics from ending up in the environment. Showcasing what our environments will soon, and some already do, look like. Creating a self-reflection for the viewer on how much plastics they use. Once they see the mass amount, take the steps to reduce the amount of plastic they use, recycle or reuse what they have, but also refuse the use of plastic.

These beautiful landscapes we see how they once were or before pollution. Landscapes in the modern-day are hard to find where there is no trash present. Our garbage is surrounding us and not just in urban areas. Most trash can be picked up by the wind until it gets stuck. Most will get stuck into water or waterways. All rivers lead to the ocean where it will find its final resting place till the end of time.

We have all seen or heard about the garbage patches out in the ocean. In the United States within our touristy beaches, we see trash minimally, yet normally someone picks it up to keep the tourist visiting. Going into less-visited waterways only has more garbage. These are the areas where nature is nature without human interference, but our garbage is clogging up these waterfronts. Our garbage that does not decompose mostly contains plastics. Plastics that we have no idea how long they will be around, and are causing many environmental issues. Below shows the concentration of plastic in the Great Pacific

Garbage Patch, which is one of many high concentration areas in our oceans.



(Figure 3: (The Ocean Cleanup), theoceancleanup.com)

Plastics are a problem, they are cheap to make and do cause damages in ecosystems. We have gotten to the point where it's just cheaper and easier to throw them away than collecting and reusing what we have already created. We knowingly understand their durability for longevity. Plastics are amazing with what they can all be used for. They are used once for just a few minutes then are put into the trash disposal system, yet we are still not using them to their full potential. The amount of time we spend with our plastics varies with what it's made for. Packaging will last seconds after entering a home and end up right in the trash. Society has become a throw-away culture with all the products we use. Once they are 'old' then they are tossed to get new, even though the old products still work or are usable. When new products are purchased the old products will end up in landfills or a donation service. Donation services are still a place where you throw away what you don't want. They will sort through your trash, finding items that are still usable, then sell them for a profit. It's still a dumping ground because most will not make it to the store shelves, it will be tossed in the trash. There is no time to clean up or fix items, they

receive so much that this is not possible to be done. This shows how much of a throw-away culture we are.

When purchasing the paintings and various items from resale stores, some of the items have been there for a long time. Using 'bad' paintings, and giving them a second chance will increase their longevity of being kept in someone's home and out of the landfills. The objects such as figures or furniture are developed to a greater meaning and uniqueness to provide the objects with the desirability to be kept for generations, and a functional use within the home. The artist's hand comes from the authorship of the meaning being presented, revealing the substance that matters for the artwork to be created.

Religious figures are implemented throughout the artworks from a personal connection with the earth and the celestial beings. Their importance comes from biblical stories about the creation of the earth and taking care of the earth that was created for us. The given stories have an updated touch on what our world looks like many years later. From the start with God creating Adam (human) the human race began. What would lead from here is the creations from humans. Leading to the destruction of god's creation of the earth. Our natural world is completely devastated and uncared for with no remorse. The earth where Adam is laying in "God's Creation our Destruction" has moved to a contemporary completed plasticization. The initial intention of the original painting was to represent the earth as a full naturalistic viewing. Present-day we have garbage piles so large that they can be seen from outer space. Presenting an update and futuristic idea to Michelangelo's "Creation of Adam."



(Figure 4: 'Creation of Adam')



(Figure 5: 'Jesus Walking on Water')

More specifically here on earth “Jesus Walking on Water” is given a modern twist to a contemporary take on the oceans and being turned into plastic, showing how we care for the world or lack thereof. We were given this earth with free will yet we are destroying it with the privileges we have. The symbolism behind “Jesus Walking on Water” is how plastic itself is representing the water. Our current and future oceans will look like this at the rate of our plastic usage. Representing how if Jesus were to come back today and walk on water, the water would be so polluted he wouldn’t be walking on water. He would be walking in our waste that is destroying the earth given to us.

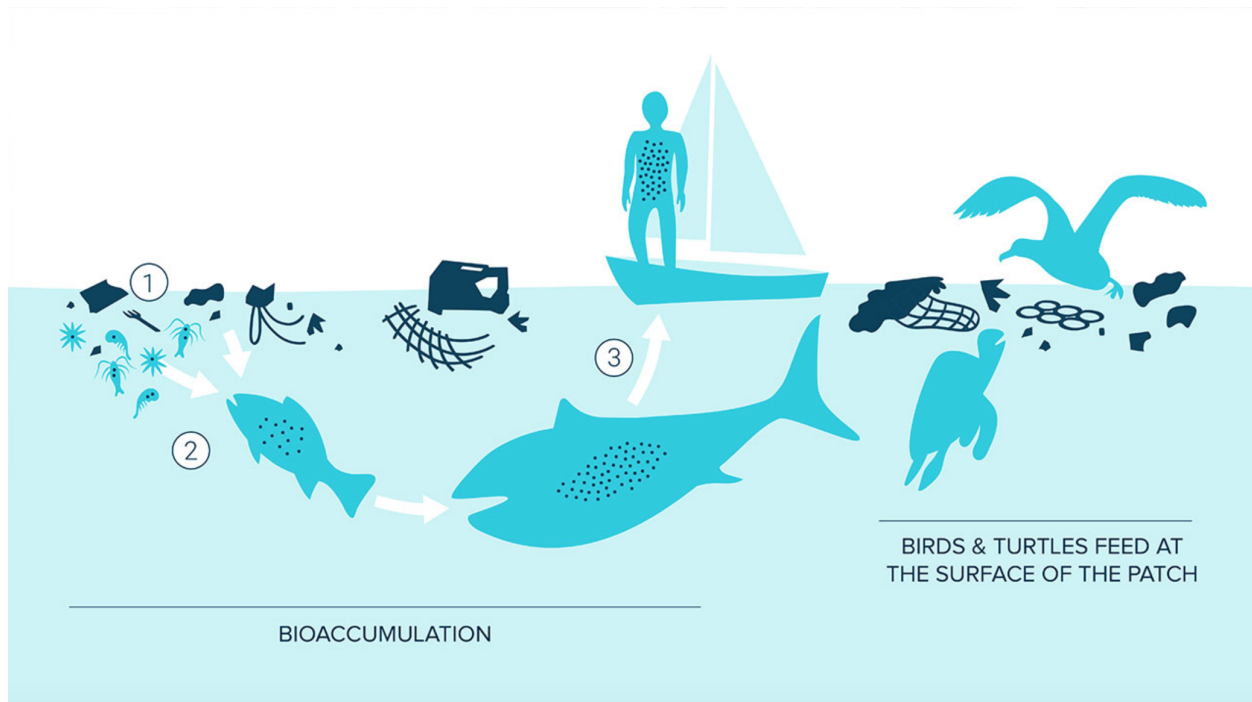


(FIGURE 6: *'Miraculous Draught of Plastic'*)

As my works move on they go in a time sequence from the creation of the earth and human to the present day. *'Miraculous Draught of Plastic'* is telling

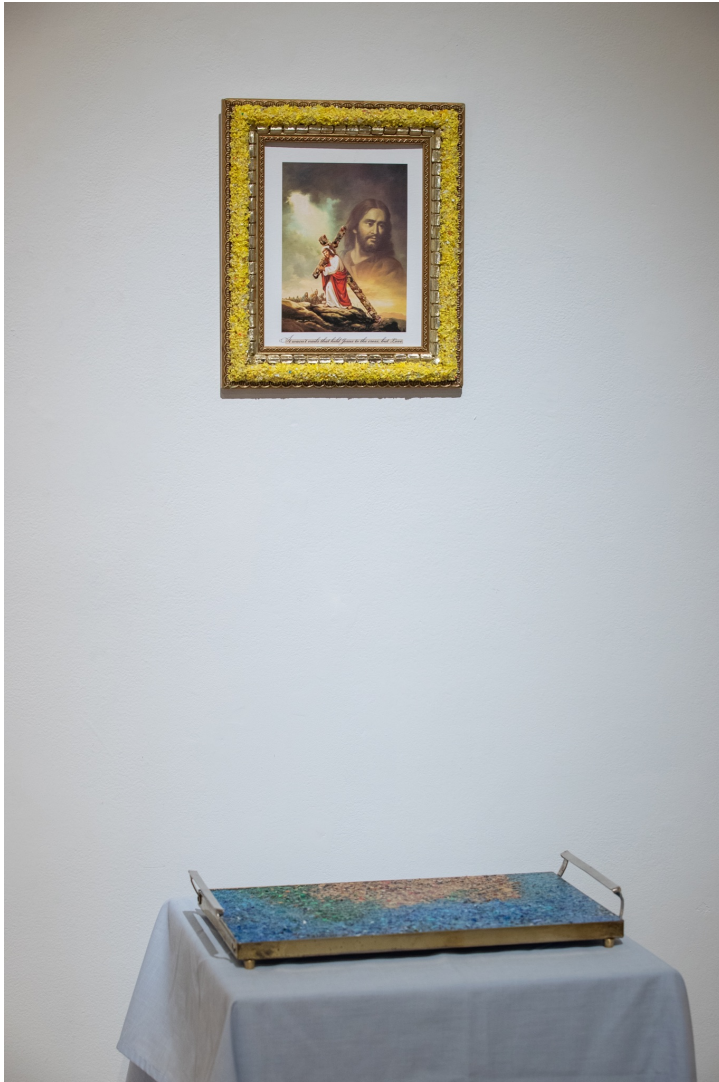
the story where Jesus taught people how to fish. He was able to catch a bountiful amount of fish to feed many, to how our fishing has turned into the modern-day of collecting plastic due to our high

volumes that have been dumped. (As you can see in Figure 6)



(Figure 7: ('The Ocean Cleanup 2'), theoceancleanup.com)

The idea is an alteration to the story wherein modern times he would be fishing and only getting plastic. Jesus is holding a net full of plastic in front of others. He is teaching them how to fish yet what he is catching is nothing but plastic. The story has changed and the people would not have been fed. To go along with this painting there is a table that shows the ocean/sea in which he was fishing. There are representations of fish created out of plastic fragments showing what they were caught in the painting. The title intends to inform the viewer of the story it comes from within the Bible and tell the viewer what was caught in the net instead. Using the original language with its modern twist of plastic creates a new story, a sad truth to our oceans.



(Figure 8: *'We Built the Cross'*)

As the story progresses we get to the end of the new beginning where Jesus is carrying the cross to be crucified. We are the ones that built the cross in the picture. The cross is nothing but plastic chunks. There is a constant addition to the mass amounts of plastic in our environment which has built up and put our world to death. We just keep making it worse without any remorse. Jesus carrying the plastic cross that we have created shows the weight and damages we have made to the earth god created. The execution of being hung on the cross has

been changed from wood to plastic. Man has made plastic and we are killing the earth with it.

Referencing how we are adding to the weight of destruction and ultimately his death because God created the earth. He is taking our sins of destruction with him. Along with having the gold frame to signify the piece to the era when iconic religious paintings were predominantly made. Along with the painting, there is a serving tray, within the serving tray are colored plastics to represent water and land. The land where the painting is flowing down into it shows the hill on which he was crucified. The water surrounding that land has been engulfed all in plastic, like the bleeding of what we have done. When serving people you want to give them the best. You don't want to be a host with a messy house and half cleaned dishes for everyone to eat from. You want to do everything right so that they can see your standards. When

something is not just ours we should care for it better than if it was just ours. We don't have this when caring for the earth. Continuing to hold ourselves accountable for the plastic usage and disposal rates when relating to their effects on the environment is our responsibility in being a good steward to the earth.

CHAPTER 6

NOSTALGIA

Memories are information that we have stored in our brain that will later influence our decisions. Decisions will ultimately be made from something that was learned in the past. We will have things that give us nostalgia. These sentimental memories from an object will gravitate us towards them. We will be more willing to keep objects of affection that are ours, or someone close to us. Giving the remembrance of a time, place, or person that you want to continuously relive the memory into the future.

Connecting to my work is key in wanting success in the longevity of the artwork. Intentions to create something personable where you would want the artwork to live on in human hands forever to prevent it from ending up in our environment. Our past has always had good memories that we love to relive. There are people from our past or present that we want to keep their memory alive.



(Figure 9: “*Wheat Field*”)

My work's aesthetic of household decor has chances of being something from your past. A memory of being at grandma and grandpa's house and always seeing a landscape painting on the wall of a farmhouse in a field. The painting makes you think of your grandparents and how much they enjoyed

having that in their house. This nostalgia of your grandparents to stay alive would generate the need to keep it in your home. With the viewer bringing the artwork home they are giving themselves a sentimental feeling every time they view it. The viewer has also removed the plastic from the system, which they will now own and take responsibility. Having the painting on the wall will not only bring them nostalgia but a conversation to start with guests that may come into their home. Stories of the times they spent visiting their grandparents and childhood will begin to take form. Visually being different they will explain what the painting is made from. In the hopes, they would spread awareness of how much plastic we use in our daily lives. Ultimately creating the activism that I am wanting to convey out of my artwork.

My major takeaway from my work is for the viewer to reflect on the past. Reflect on what they do, and how much they contribute. Figuring out changes that can be made not only to prevent the use of plastic but take back control of what they are using. It has become natural that we do not have a choice in what we get our food in. We believe that plastic is the more sanitary option of receiving food when plastic comes from the black crude oil from the ground. There are many options of what crude oil can be turned into. The same substance we fuel our cars with is also what we use to keep our food sanitary.

CHAPTER 7

THE SHOW

The exhibition is mounted in a traditional gallery style, to the left is a progression of time in order around the walls. Each artwork is mounted in a style that would be in a home. Works that have multiple pictures have a salon, interior design look resembling how they would be mounted on walls of a house. The title cards were all paper rather than this specific gallery's normal clear plastic labels, not wanting to generate more plastic into the world when it is unnecessary. Space is needed for the distance of each work to be enjoyed at the different vantage points, rather it is close up or further away from certain artworks that can alter how your eyes see them. The exhibition was planned to be moving through time in a continuation of each picture. As we progress from the creation of the earth to our modern-day, each having an updated modern twist changes how the storyline will go. In the process of creating the exhibition, all ideas within the work were continued in its presentation of not creating more plastic waste. Promoting mindset change can easily be done. The changes are not difficult and are only providing a healthier environment.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

The communication of what is being delivered to the viewer is key to the artwork. This thesis and my body of work have continued to grow and progress in the last three years during my time at Georgia Southern. This work genuinely communicates my message without going against my values and commitment to this planet. All this work met the goal of 100% recycled materials. Nothing is purchased new for each work created with these recycled materials as well as all of my plastic waste in my recycling process. Any waste generated from my creative process has been kept over the past three years and put in a container, not tossed away. This helps keep my work sustainable and back to the idea of changing the mindset through a visual experience. The greatest success of this body of work is that it came out of setting sustainable parameters and following through. Additionally, the works had items that are from secondhand stores which someone has had in their home and gotten rid of like paintings, frames, tables, and a tray. Even the religious photos were relegated to the aisles of second-hand stores. Placing these items in the context of a gallery helps change the mindset for these items that can be used beyond what their intended use was.



(Figure 10: *'Fish Tank Lamp'*)

'Fish Tank Lamp' uses an aquarium background that would be tossed

once someone was done with having their fish and not even thought about it. Turning the recycled items

into a lamp takes them beyond their intended use. Equally, comforter bags stuffed with recycled water bottles as filling for chair cushions achieve this same idea. Once the comforter is out of the bag, the bag will end up straight in the trash. Not giving a second thought about what else it could be used for. That is my Myelination idea to change the mindset of the plastic we receive in our lives through this experience and make different decisions in the future. Pushing my conceptual development and staying true to recycling through my medium have been a large developing process for the future. The approach of the content is necessary to get a reaction out of someone, but more than that, a change. This will be important for the future of the work and what could come from it.

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