

Hannah Kelley
Artist Statement

Observation: 28 Days

This body of work has stemmed from an everlasting obsession with nature and its essence. What attracts me to this subject matter is nature's vulnerability to change, and also the fact that we all get so wrapped up in our "everyday lives" that we tend to forget about and reject the things that are given to us and are essentially free in life. We often participate in these careless acts of destruction towards nature more frequently than positive ways of contribution. I began focusing on the relationships that humans form with nature; sometimes and most often insensibly. The ways that we utilize our environment affects us and our future much more than we all truly realize. Not taking that extra initiative to contribute also says a lot about our culture and our ways of living as a whole. As I took a step back and really thought about my contributions to this earth and its underlying issues, I felt that the problems surrounding litter was the one that affected me the most.

I recently moved into a home that belongs to a neighborhood community. I began to realize that on a daily basis I had to walk around my yard and collect trash that had been nonchalantly tossed out. Since I wasn't the most eco-savvy individual this was pretty overwhelming for me considering it was something I generally chose to ignore. The fact that this trash was, and still is, in my yard, it directly affected me and definitely caused me to become more aware of this careless act of littering. This overabundance of waste seemed to be a noticeable issue throughout the entire neighborhood, but having a disruption in my daily schedule (observing and collecting the trash in my yard) was truly an eye opener. I am actually thankful for the individuals who contributed to the waste in my environment because it helped me become more aware of my surroundings and that alone makes a difference. These little acts, either positive or negative, will eventually make an outcome adding up to positive change or gradual degradation.

Through my frustrations with others' carelessness, I started to realize that this was an issue I was having within myself as well. To address this personal issue, I began to write and research the individual pieces of trash I found in the yard. As I would collect this trash I became interested in all that it was made of, and how those materials and ingredients directly affected humans' and animals' lives. I then started to collect, write, and photograph on a day to day basis. I decided to commit one month straight to investing a great amount of time to a monotonous routine of observing and documenting the waste found in my yard. As I wrote about this waste I photographed it, documenting its place and time of existence. This investigative process led to obsessing over these individual items, definitely making the procedure now a part of my daily routine and it became necessary to my overcoming of the problems I was having with society and myself. The more I worked with these items, the more I started to think about the exquisiteness of each piece. The fact that this harmful piece of trash, so damaging to our earth, had this aesthetic beauty about itself became interesting to me. After this realization, I started to scan the pieces of trash on a flatbed scanner and I started to refer to these as the trash's portrait. These portraits became monumental and drew attention to the little acts. I wanted to scan the trash opposed to photographing it because it would be yet another approach to the investigative process and the scans rendered the colors and details that made these so intriguing to me. Combining these two approaches, photographing and documenting v. scanning and giving the trash significance, was an effective way to show that the trash was a hindrance to our environment but also made for a beautiful piece of art. To wrap up this repetitive routine that I was becoming so used to after 28 days, I separated the trash and carried it off to the recycling bin to be reprocessed. This was my way of contributing to the problem and also a way of departing with something I was so infatuated with.