

Thesis Proposal

The apocalypse. Armageddon. The rapture. The end of human existence has been a daunting subject since the very beginning of our ability to conceptualize abstract ideas. My knowledge of an apocalypse was first shaped by the book of Revelations, but continued to become influenced by witnessing destruction of the land around me in Oregon by climate change. The side effects of climate change are affecting every individual person across the globe, but not by our own individual choice; the earth and the six kingdoms that inhabit it have fallen victim to large scale conquerors: oil companies, mass agriculture, and the people who claim to govern their masses. Hollow men by T.S. Eliot describes the slow progression of the end of humanity that is rooted in corporate greed which inherently leaves husks of consumers left to aimlessly wander through life with no reason. Without hope, he ends this poem with “This is the way the world ends, / not with a bang but with a whimper”, which is reliant on our actions as individuals now. These conglomerates have monopolized natural resources as a way to manipulate their consumers, but we must combat this path that they have set us on by speaking out against the theft of life happening before us.

My line of inquiry is to document surrounding areas in Oregon that are being ravaged by climate change, with accuracy and personal voice. Aided by the most recent scientific data, I will create a time and space that depicts a downfall of our society due to the unequal catastrophic contribution to climate change. I will emphasize and explore the human error that has led to this demise, that being: the misuse of resources, wrongly believed to be owned by these greedy industries that have unfairly led populations of people to follow an unsustainable structured way of life. I fear that we've reached a point in which these aggressive industries have won the war against this earth, by swallowing up consumers, leaving them careless and without reason to fight for a cleaner future.

I propose to create a science fictional diary set in the year 2030, that will visually depict the apocalyptic topography in Oregon that was induced by dramatic climatic changes. There will be layered elements to this diary including entries, printed photographs, cyanotype documentation, and pressed plants that will work cohesively as an object. I will explore and reflect on what I believe to be the key factors between 2020 and 2030 that have led to this destruction, and reflect on my place within this barren and sour landscape as a hollowed, once was, consumer. The documentation will serve as a glimpse into a bleak future for my audience, where action was never taken in regards to combating climate change on an individual or mass scale. Through this book, I hope to instill a sense of urgency regarding the climate crisis, and a reflective look inward on personal roles within this travestie. However, I want to emphasize that

the individual person is not directly to blame, but we can all take precautions within our lives to resist the industries that lead this crisis.

Much of what I have compiled for this project has been visually guided by The Road by Cormac McCarthy, and Will Wilson who is a Diné photographer located in the Navajo Region. The Road is a very ambiguous text about a post-apocalyptic time. The audience knows little detail throughout this book and relies heavily on the actions and thoughts of the two main characters for emotion, emphasizing the instincts of survival and fear. There is never comedic relief for the audience and the only warmth was found in dreams, which creates an exceptionally realistic apocalyptic world. This true depiction of a hollowing reality is found in Will Wilson's project titled AIR (Autoimmune Response). This is a multidimensional project that started with self portraits of Wilson within landscapes but with an apocalyptic twist, implying that the land of his people has become toxic and unlivable. He has also created a greenhouse within this project that cultivates native plants to the Navajo region, reinforcing hope within his audience and suggesting interactive solutions to help combat this climate crisis. These artists combined with scientific evidence of climate change will help me through the process of creating this book.

The process for creating this book will begin by documenting the world via my 35mm camera and by using the cyanotype process. The photographs alone would create a generally ambiguous story, so to aid in the details of this world I will write journal entries that coincide with the visual evidence. These journals will address more socially driven topics like the unequal displacement of BIPOC and the disillusionment surrounding climate change that was perpetuated by the trump administration. I will also elaborate on the historical travesties between 2020 and 2030 that created the world in which I reside, where I will lean on scientific projections to enhance my personal opinions on this topic. Due to covid-19, people will not be able to hold this book in their hand so I will prepare and upload a digital version of this book for consumption; while not ideal, it could be beneficial in regard to reaching a wider audience.

Aided by personal memory, this book will serve as documentation of this climate crisis and reflect on a time in which the battle for a greener future was lost. This is a personal project in that I need my own ways to cope with the climate crisis, but through expressing my personal voice on this topic, I'm hoping to tap into a wider audience that shares some of these anxieties that I have for this world. The idea of living through an apocalypse is terrifying, however, this is the potential future that is mapped out for us. The only way to get off this course is to address climate related problems in our own lives. We'll be faced with a choice as individuals, if we haven't already: are we ready to be complacent with the path that was constructed by greedy industries and take up the lives of hollowed people, or do we fight for a cleaner and sustainable future that holds promise for all life?

Thesis Synopsis

RCP 8.5 is a prediction put out by IPCC, of a future that holds massive loss and destruction, due to human influence on our global warming rate. The RCP 8.5 prediction is also known as the “business as usual” pathway, meaning that this is a reality that the earth and its inhabitants could face. After struggling through my upset with this casually predicted demise of life, my piece, *The Future Of RCP 8.5*, is my personal construction of this projected state. This work lives as a short film, and depicts my personal relationship with the climate crisis. It is set in the years 2030 and 31 where the earth is now a destroyed and harsh landscape due to human error and I am seemingly one of the last people to survive into this time and place, leaving me with nothing but time to reflect on the array of disasters that ultimately led up to this post-apocalyptic landscape. The video focuses almost entirely on this box that I have found which holds various personal content from this future- mostly being photographs, journal entries and some found objects as well, and is shot entirely from a point of view perspective.

When starting on this creative journey, I began with collecting imagery in surrounding areas that had already begun facing extreme weather brought on by our changing climate. I had easy access to massive amounts of land that had been ravaged by the horrific forest fires in the summer of 2020 and many locations that experienced extreme flooding and rainfall. When I was photographing in these places, I inherently entered a contemplative state of mind; trying to process the massive amount of loss that this surrounding land has already experienced, while also being faced with a reality that this is only the beginning of the extreme weather that will continue to increase in severity. While collecting this photo archive, I was also cataloging my emotions and working through my personal relationship with this crisis by journaling- using this to sift through my thoughts and create a clearer vision of the topics that I wanted to include later in the project. After considering my recent experiences, and having a vast image bank to work with, I then decided on the narrative that was going to be told through the written portion. While creating the journals for my piece, I also spent this time researching more on my various topics, keeping up to date with climate crisis news, and learning about a survivalistic lifestyle, in order to create a seamless and cohesive piece. With the addition of some found objects, and tactile tools like rubber bands, baggies and pens, I chose an aluminum clipboard box to house all of the content that I had created, and finalized my project with a short film of the box in use.

I chose to envelop my box inside of a video for various reasons. The first being that in relation to the box of content, I could use the film as a tool to help create a detailed and believable world; Letting the audience see my campsite, clothes, food, how I store my water, ect... allowing my audience into what I'm experiencing. I also utilized the drama and mystery of another person to help keep the viewer interested, as throughout the video, the audience hears my voice describing my fear of other people that could still be out here; finally concluding the

video with very short clip of me, vulnerably walking back into my camp to find this person looking through my things. My second reasoning was to control the viewing process. With the large amount of content included- about 55 images and 13 journal entries- I feared that my audience would not reach the level of impact that I wanted them to feel if they were left to explore this item themselves. My voice over, in congruent to the video, let me lead people through the imagery and journal entries in enough time to not become bored, while also emphasizing the topics that I felt need to be highlighted.

When constructing the final presentation of my work, I considered an installation first- in a reality where Covid did not affect the viewing, which would have included my campsite and final box within a white wall gallery space. I wanted my audience to experience the tactileness of my box and to be immersed in this world that I created. Deciding that that was unsafe, the next best option was to show my audience the physicality of my box through a film. The installation would inherently limit my audience to a group of people that I can assume have been exposed to the severity of this crisis already. With that in mind, and with now having an unrestricted form of my work, I wanted to shed the constraints of a building. In an ideal world, I would show my video outside in a public space with no limitation on my audience, this setting also being a useful tool to have my audience physically connected to the land that I am talking about through my film. Although I enjoy the idea of having no restrictions on general viewing of my piece, I did have an audience and intent when creating. I personally am furious and terrified with the state of the crisis, and wanted to instill a sense of urgency within my audience; Hoping that this could be used to “fuel a fire” in the next generation of environmentalists. I want this video to be used as a tool to infuriate those fighting this battle. In addition, I want this video to be informative to those who are not quite sure about where they stand within this topic, or maybe don't understand the severity of this situation. And finally I had to keep in mind the climate change deniers, hoping that if this video were to reach them, they could consider their own lives in this future.

This was a challenging piece in that it turned out to include so much more than just my personal qualms with the climate crisis- reflecting that of the crisis itself; it is not one thing, this crisis is everything happening all at once. I was forced to consider my perceived whiteness throughout this piece, I had to find a deeper understanding of the colonization of the Native land and people, and I had to grapple with a future *after* this constructed future that I put myself in. This project was a gift and a fault; I allowed myself to dive into my upset with this crisis, but was shown the great depths of how far this problem really reaches. Through this personal journey and furthering my research of congruent crises relating to the climate, I find myself in an even more troubled state of mind than when I began. My piece, The Future of RCP 8.5, represents a jumping off point- fueling my own fire to expand this project, and develop my understanding of the climate crisis even further.

Bibliography

Artists and Artworks

Mad Max: Fury Road. Film. Warner Bros. , 2015.

- This not only shows the possibility of the future that the earth is destined for, there is a huge Female Liberation component to this film. The majority of the film is based around the escape of these females who are being held prisoner so they can be raped and impregnated to further the human race. And then at the end of the film, they all decide to reclaim the Big city that is holding precious natural resources, water, vegetation, ect. By killing the Man in charge, and in turn ending that patriarchal rule. Even Max himself dips at the end of the film, leaving the leadership role truly to the woman, knowing he has no place there.

"Someday This Will All Be Gone" Artist Talk by Mike Vos. Youtube . Dead Cities , 2020.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=louqczAH6No>.

- This is his artist talk done at Pushtdot studio in portland. He talks about his process a lot and working with his 4x5 camera and how he chose his double exposures. I enjoyed how he didn't choose his locations randomly, but rather the vegetation that was native to the state he was in mirrored the abandoned structure also found in the same town. He tried to keep his images timeless, no signs, dates, or cultural indications of what time it could be which I enjoyed.

Embick, Francis. "The Surf at the End of the World Is Going to Be Epic ," 2011.
<https://mimi.pnca.edu/a/4061>.

- This thesis is a diptych and a set up sculptures placed in close proximity to each other, Paintings on the wall and the sculptural elements are on the ground in front. This thesis depicts the atmosphere of the end of the world and the future organisms that will have evolved to live on this land. Focusing on three main aspects in these elements: water time and change, Francis spreads the urgency that this is what is to eventually happen with this land, and the rift between humans and this land will only deepen until there are no semblance of humans left. However I feel like the title has some humor to it which I enjoy, but I noticed that it takes some of the urgency away from the idea behind the project. That could very well make this topic more palatable for viewers.

"Will Wilson." 2019. Photoshelter.Com. 2019. <https://willwilson.photoshelter.com/about>.

- This is just a website where you can find all of Will Wilsons projects, including his artist statements located on the about page. This is a quick introduction to his Project AIR (AutoImmune Response). This project is Wilson's response to the now toxic land that surrounds him, the props, including his gas mask to his well equipped "hut" or sanctuary, implies that this is a disastrous time in which he has to now figure out how to survive. This work features gorgeous landscape photography, post apocalyptic props, and now includes a green house where Wilson

Kali Wallner
Thesis Writing Deliverables

is growing indigenous native plants. I know this is a touchy subject for me to cover considering I am a white looking female - I acknowledge that Salem is currently on the stolen land of the Luckiamute, Chempenfa, Santiam, and Ahantchuyuk Tribes, and my goal with this project is to wholeheartedly, recognize that I cannot relate with their traumas of the past, but I too am a victim of this patriarchy.

Burtynsky, Edward. 2009. *Burtynsky Oil*. Göttingen: Steidl.

- Oil is a photo book produced by Edward Burtynsky, whose intention was to explore the vast industrial culture in awe of its structures. Through the process of collecting these images from across the world, He became conflicted with his personal use of oil and the potential causation of our downfall. Many of the images that I was inspired by for this project came from his vast landscapes of human intervention. Massive grids of cars, thousands of miles of oil rigs, towers of tires that will never be used again. The images are beautifully shot, but the subject matter is rather terrifying, and the contrast between these two were very powerful to me.

Pierce, Ryan. 2014. *Postcards from Paradise*. Paint on Postcards. Distributed Via Subscription. <https://ryanpierce.net/section/466936-postcards-from-paradise.html>.

- I was first introduced to Ryan Pierce by visiting his work in the show *The Map Is Not The Territory*, displayed at the Portland Art Museum, and then decided to reach out to Ryan to discuss my project. I was really intrigued by his postcard series, *Postcards From Paradise*, which are postcards that he collected from small towns across the United States that are striving to keep the coal industry alive, as they were hubs for coal transportation via railway. He took these postcards and painted on top of them adding, sarcastically truthful twists about the reality of this industry. Like Burtynsky's work, I became really inspired by this idea of photographing industry in an unglamorous and ugly way, and Peirce's slightly humorous way of navigating through this topic led me to include some moments in my final project where I too chose to laugh at the seriousness of this horrific outcome.

Literature

Asimov, Isaac, Frederik Pohl, and Kim Stanley Robinson. 2018. *Our Angry Earth*. New York: Tor.

- This book was written in 1991 and I recognise that that was 30 years ago and a lot more research on climate change has emerged since then, but this book has only proved to me even more so that we have neglected to take the right action in the right amount of time to prevent further destruction.

Barillaro, A. (2014). *The Road, Cormac McCarthy*. North Essendon, Vic.: Radiant Heart Publishing.

Kali Wallner

Thesis Writing Deliverables

- The Road is a book about a father and son duo that are traveling through an apocalyptic wasteland in hope of trying to find a location even just slightly better than where they are at right now. It's a very vague story in that we never find out core details usually found in literature like, character names, time, location, and plot. The audience is told that they are traveling south which is the only sense of direction throughout this book. It was a heart wrenching read in that the quality of this world not only exposes a true apocalyptic reality with the lack of detail, but also emphasizes the necessary instincts of survival and fear. The only warmth is found in a few dreams had by the dad, and the audience never experiences true comedic relief. This book has guided my own creation of the world that I will be experiencing within my project, and showed me a truly barren and post-apocalyptic world, as opposed to a post apocalyptic dystopia, which is found in a lot of Hollywood media.

Eliot, T. (n.d.). The Hollow Men. Retrieved October/November, 2020, from <https://msu.edu/~jungahre/transmedia/the-hollow-men.html>

- The Hollow Men is written by T.S. Eliot, and can be interpreted to explain the relationship between capitalistic greed and the people that are emptied out by this lifestyle. It works as commentary on how this industry swallows up the employed and spits them out, leaving them hollow and soulless, which marks the end of humanity within this world and ultimately leading to the figurative death of all people. I was inspired by this poem knowing that it represented a distinct downfall caused by large capital corporations and used it as a tool to guide my book. In a way, I chose to showcase the future where capitalist institutions won and left the hollow people behind, so empty that they aren't even starving for hope anymore.

Literature - SP2021

Demos, T J. 2016. *Decolonizing Nature : Contemporary Art and the Politics of Ecology*. Berlin: Sternberg Press.

- I focused in on the chapter Gardening Against the Apocalypse when reading this book, as the topics that I'm grappling with are very heavy and emotionally draining, and this chapter unwraps the many ways in which art and people can combat the climate crisis with hope. I think This chapter really showed me how well art and activism work together- giving me more hope for the after this project ends. This was a very vulnerable work for me, and although I loved it personally, I was very shy in terms of sharing it with people- this book let me see the vulnerability of others doing work in the same realm as me, and succeeding, which was Reassuring.

Vine Deloria. 2006. *The World We Used to Live in : Remembering the Powers of the Medicine Men*. Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Pub.

- This book is a collection of accounts from Native American ceremonies, rituals, and cultural practices of tribes throughout the North American continent. There is also commentary by Vine Deloria Jr. that explains the reality of these accounts as some are from european settlers who tend to diffuse these significant happenings with their lack of knowledge. I really enjoyed relating this book to my understanding of posthumanism, and the practices within this

theory, and I let this book guide me in understanding how people have been in communication with the land for centuries. I took this deeper understanding and applied it to how I wanted to continue to live in the new landscape and future.

Factual Evidence

Alexandratos, N. and J. Bruinsma. 2012. World agriculture towards 2030/2050: the 2012 revision. ESA Working paper No. 12-03. Rome, FAO.

- This is a revised paper, first written in 2006 and then revised in 2012 that explains the predictions of what our agricultural industry will look like between 2030 and 2050. It is a factual based paper, with scientific studies supporting the information. I have focused my attention to the Agricultural Production and Natural Resource use chapter to understand the use that will happen between now and then, and its effects that it will have on the environment, if it's continued use of biofuels to produce feedstock prevails till 2050. There is also a brief excerpt before this chapter that explains that it is naive to think our warming climate will stop, and recognizes that policies put in place in 2012 are not aiding in trying to cool the climate.

2020. Review of Trends in Atmospheric Carbon Dioxide. NOAA, November.
<https://www.esrl.noaa.gov/gmd/ccgg/trends/global.html>.

- This database contains graphs that map greenhouse gas emission data taken from the Mauna Loa Observatory in Hawaii. This observatory has been collecting data on the gradual rise of Carbon Dioxide(CO₂) Methane (CH₄) Nitrous Oxide (N₂O) and Sulfur Hexafluoride (SF₆) for the past few decades, and is hold the longest continuous recording of Carbon Dioxide emissions, globally. Because this observatory is located on the side of the Mauna loa Volcano at 11,135 ft, it is able to gather data from the top of the troposphere that has been rather undisturbed by vegetation, human and animal activity, and other pollutants which bears more accurate measurements. This single observatory is run by the NOAA (National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration), and is part of a larger collection of observatories known as the Global Monitoring Laboratory.

Climate Change. 2016. The Oregon Conservation Strategy,
www.oregonconservationstrategy.org/key-conservation-issue/climate-change/. Accessed Oct. 2020.

Kali Wallner

Thesis Writing Deliverables

- This is a website that focuses specifically on issues and solutions regarding conservation within Oregon's topography. In the Key Conservation Issues tab there are the issues regarding climate change that break down the page into individual sections revolving around causes, side effects and solutions. This website is a secondary resource but has clearly laid out information with trustworthy sources that I was able to access easily within the site. I was educated on the side effects that threaten the natural land in Oregon, those being, but are not limited to: an increase in flooding, rising sea levels, desertification due to an increase in intense forest fires, rapidly melting snowpacks, an increase in heavy precipitation, and unpredictable ocean life due to unstable upwellings caused by the ocean surface temperature increasing.

Luce, C. (2019). *Fourth National Climate Assessment* (pp. 1036-1078, Rep.). Washington D.C., District of Columbia: National Communications Associations.

- This is the Fourth National Climate Assessment published by the National Communications Association in 2019. I focused on chapter 4, title Northwest, where it shows the effects of climate change that the people of the Pacific Northwest region of the United States are experiencing. This led me to a specific image that laid out specific effects of climate change that will affect specific infrastructures and people throughout Oregon, that I aided in my proposal presentation and knowledge about climate change in Oregon. This chapter also laid out accurate projections of what climate change will bring in the near future, in regards to communities and infrastructures, those being increased respiratory hospitalizations due to forest fires, increase in heat related deaths due to temperatures rising in the summer, an increase in homelessness as families will be displaced due to an increase in extreme weather and storms, and it is forecasted that migration to the PNW will increase with people seeking colder weather from hotter regions which will put a stressor on housing markets, food distribution, health and social institutions, and further displacement of families caused by overpopulation in this region.

King, Tobias. 2020. "Wildland Fire Fighting Accounts." Verbal Communication, 2020.

- Tobias King has been a wildland firefighter for 5 years now, and has first hand experience with how to survive drastic weather- not just the severity of fires, but camping in various storms and harsh conditions while out fighting these fires. He has guided me in creating a more realistic world that I portrayed in my final video; helping me through situations like how and where my campsite would be set up for optimal warmth, how I should gather resources like water, wood and kindling, and providing me with all of the equipment and tools that I used throughout the entirety of this process. He was a wealth of knowledge when it came to everything outside of the content within my box.