

It's Plastic
The Catherine G. Murphy Gallery, St. Catherine University
September 10 – October 28, 2012

After seeing an episode of *National Geographic's Strange Days on Planet Earth* showing young sea birds dying because their stomachs were full of plastic cigarette lighters, I started researching the gross contamination of our rivers, streams, beaches and oceans by throwaway plastic objects. Objects that should have made their way to garbage dumps or recycling centers have instead ended up in our oceans and are contaminating the entire oceanic biological food chain, from the smallest one-celled zooplankton to the largest mammal, the baleen Blue Whale.

My research on plastic's impact on the ecosystem is the focus of *It's Plastic*, a solo exhibition at the Catherine G. Murphy Gallery at St. Catherine University. The installation consists of a 30-foot wide by 3-foot high ceramic tile wall installation depicting sea life. This work is composed of 92 ceramic pieces whose negative space resembles the outline of a fishing net. The title of this piece, *Net*, has multiple implications. Literally, *Net* references the problem caused by lost plastic fishing nets floating in the ocean, which continue to catch and kill sea life. For these creatures, the added element of pollution compounds their daily struggle to survive. Metaphorically, *Net's* narrative pulls the viewer into the work, catching them, causing them to have an emotional response and furthering their journey of education, exploration and social action.

Also included in the exhibition is a smaller version of *Net* consisting of 17 tiles and a display of double-walled teacups decorated with a sprigged baby loggerhead sea turtle hunting a baby jellyfish. Each mug contains a resource card directing people to the *Algalita Marine Research Institute's* website as well as other informative sites dedicated to ridding our oceans of plastic. All royalties and after tax profits from this exhibition will be donated to the *Algalita Marine Research Institute*.

The exhibition includes a monitor with videos that detail the increasing threat of plastic pollution, a display of published scholarly articles and pamphlets with information on how you can help lessen the plastic contamination of our oceans. By making you aware of the degradation of our environment and giving you suggestions, tools and resources on how you can become involved, I hope to compel you to take action, on whatever commitment level you feel comfortable, and help in stemming this pollution.

- Kimberlee Joy Roth