

HALF

EMPTY

Half Empty Team

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Professor

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Students

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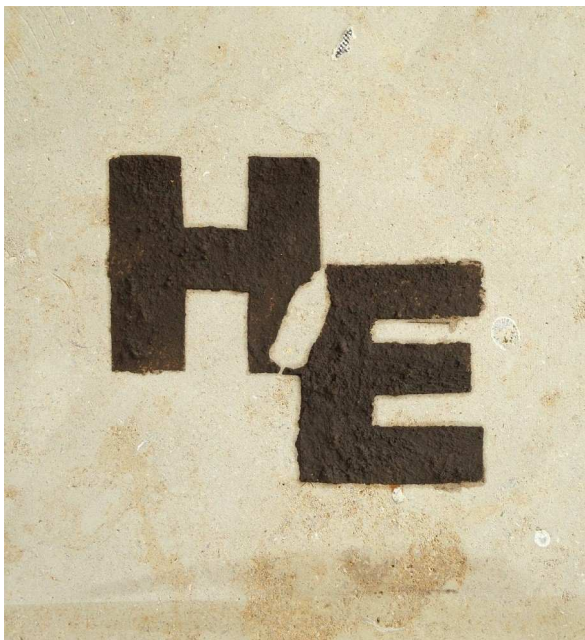
Mulvane Art Museum Staff

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Michael Allen

This project was a collaboration between the Mulvane Art Museum and the Washburn University Art Department. It was funded in part through a Center for Teaching Excellence and Learning grant.



Half Empty

Whether it's satire, protest or celebrating people's history, artists are uniquely placed and trained to shine a light on systemic inequality, oppression, racism, environmental abuse, war, and many other ways we humans fall short. From Goya to the Guerilla Girls, artists throughout history have employed their skills and strategies in the service of our most pressing political and social issues.

Right here in Topeka in our capital building, the muralist John Steuart Curry painted the brutality of war and the zealots who (although we may sometimes agree with their ends) used savage means to achieve their objectives. More recently, the beloved Wellsville artist, Elizabeth "Grandma" Layton unabashedly wore her heart and her beliefs on her sleeve in drawings that condemned our moral shortcomings, while celebrating our diversity and compassion and challenging us to embody our right to free speech.

Among other rights we take for granted in the U.S. is the assumed right to clean and plentiful water. Rarely have we considered it as a finite or vulnerable resource, until now. But as the Ogallala aquifer is depleted and our rivers and streams run dry, Kansans from the Governor on down are beginning to take notice. This project created a new platform for artists to join this crucial and timely conversation.

To understand how central water is to our (and the planet's) health, economy and culture, I led a group of Washburn students in a public campaign to inform and advocate on issues related to water. We took a deep dive into the many places where water intersects with and nourishes our lives. We examined water as a practical resource in Kansas and on the Washburn campus, and as a cultural signifier when used for decoration, leisure and social status.

To prepare for our campaign, we studied the strategies and techniques of political poster makers, muralists, conceptual and performance artists and their counterparts in movements from the Suffragettes to the Occupy Movement. As a part of the exhibition *Drift and Drag*, our research and design process was open to the public via a studio space/installation created in the Mulvane Art Museum specifically for this project. Visitors got interact with the artists, watch our work unfold (including false starts and failures) and even join with us on special initiatives like the *Imagining Water through Poetry* event described later in this book.

Half Empty broadened the scope of the community-based work I have been engaged in for the last twenty-five years by approaching a very specific subject with a flexible and ephemeral set of media and strategies. It is also was a step forward for the university. By offering students a real world application of their art training that served a social purpose, Washburn acknowledged the critical role that artists can play in addressing the most complex and critical issues of the day.

- Dave Loewenstein



Message(s) in a Bottle

Visitors to the Half Empty installation at the Mulvane Art Museum were encouraged to collaborate with us by adding their thoughts and ideas to a large wall drawing we titled Message(s) in a Bottle. As a prompt, we asked "If you could send a message to the water keepers of the world, what would it be?"



Message(s) in a Bottle – selected transcriptions

Our sweat, blood and tears are not made of oil.

I did flips in the water with my friends.

Water is proteen to our world that we drink because it's important to our world.

I was a fish once...once...

I love hot showers. Do I have to shorten them?

If you want to stay afloat, don't poison the resistance.

Kansas is a coastal state (every flush goes to the Gulf).

We once grew maize without water. What has changed?

I have heard many people say water is a renewable resource but is it really?

Kansas is leaking,
But we're trying to hold it back.

For forty-five minutes I had to bail out my overflowing sink into my toilet while my neighbor relaxed in her shower.

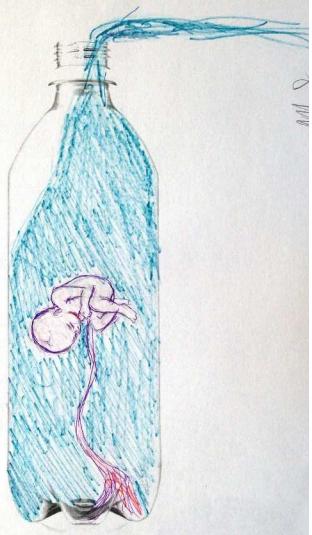
Where will we be without it?

Don't pee in the pool.

When it goes,...We go. The End.

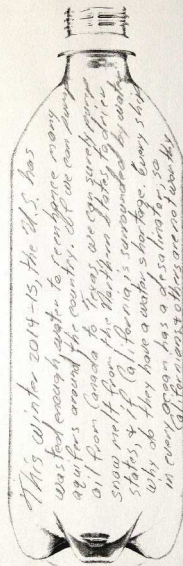
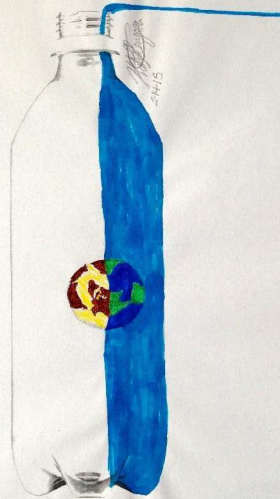


I think
Water is
More
to
are world
You are
doing
a Great
Job I
think feel
shud Not
litter from
the water
mass





we once got
maize
without
water.
What has
changed?

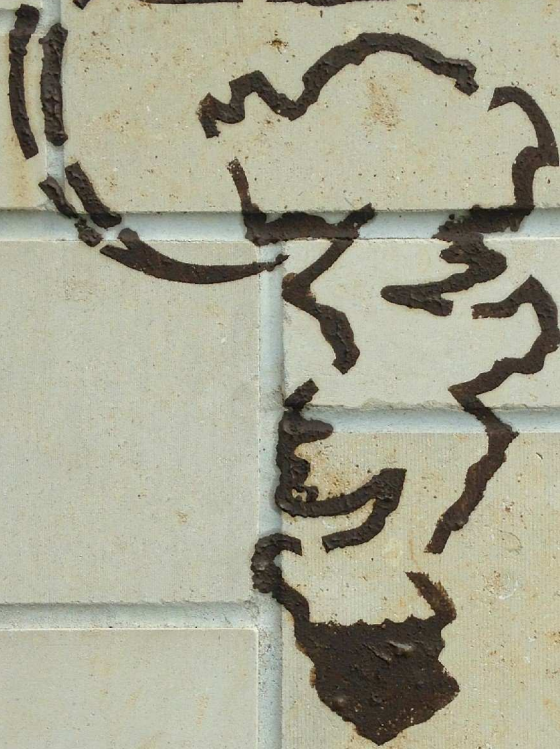


This winter 2014-15, the U.S. has
was hot enough water to recharge many
aquifers around the country. It's even drier
in 11 from Canada to Texas, we get zero snow
5000 miles from the North Pole to the
states, & the (at least) 50% of the water
why, do they have a water shortage. Every single
in every region has a shortage of water.
The!!



IT'S TOO FIK UP CRASH

I'M ABOUT TAPPED OUT.



OGALLALA

Imagining Water Through Poetry

On February 20th as a part of the Drift & Drag symposium, agents from the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture and the Half Empty team led attendees in a collaborative Imagining about water. Participants gathered in small groups and reflected on three prompts:

- a memory of water
- a question in relation to water issues
- an action or solution that addresses a water related issue

After everyone had a chance to share their thoughts, the groups broke into pairs and created the short poems on the following pages.



Water everywhere, water nowhere
Cherish its beauty, cherish its value
Protect it, conserve it
Pay for what it's worth
Think as you drink

With the red light at night
As the waves crash the shore
We are one with the sea
Our shared Breath; once adored
Unfortunately now – no more

Fear of abundance and emptiness
Conflict of being seventy percent contained
Thirst of fulfillment

Wading in the cold fast water at night
Floating on the bay, no land in sight
Images of childhood, water would always be alright

Water provides life
Water takes life
Water is life

Memory playing in place
Disconnect rift adrift no feel
Celebrate in spirit, sink or swim

Tradition of body-meets-water
Demonstrate the wise example
Connection education awareness community

Admitting failure but not despairing
Water connects us all
Failure to honor the water leads to dune

Power of water, fear of ice
And its absence, parched fields no rain.
Accepting the forces and cycles of nature,
Acting to help sustain them

The Campaign,

On a windy day in May, the Half Empty team debuted their projects around the Washburn campus. They took three forms: mud stencils, repurposed water bottles filled with slips of paper printed on one side with fake dollar bills and the other with bottled water facts, and a mock shampoo commercial that promoted SipCo "I'd Tap That" purified water. All three advocated for the team's chosen campaign,

to end the sale of bottled water on campus.



Sip Co USA
I'D TAP THAT
PURIFIED WATER



www.halfemptyproject.blogspot.com

MANUFACTURER'S COUPON EXPIRES 02/20/16

\$2.00 OFF

Any Sip Co Bottled Water Product

Retailer: Alberto-Culver will reimburse you for face value of coupon plus 8¢ if submitted in compliance with our Coupon Redemption Policy, available upon request. Cash value: 1/100¢. Mail to: Alberto-Culver, CMS Dept. 22400, One Fawcett Drive, Dal Rio, TX 78840. Void where prohibited, taxed or restricted. Limit one coupon per purchase. Consumer pays sales tax. NOT VALID WITH ANY OTHER PROMOTIONS. Expires 06/30/09.

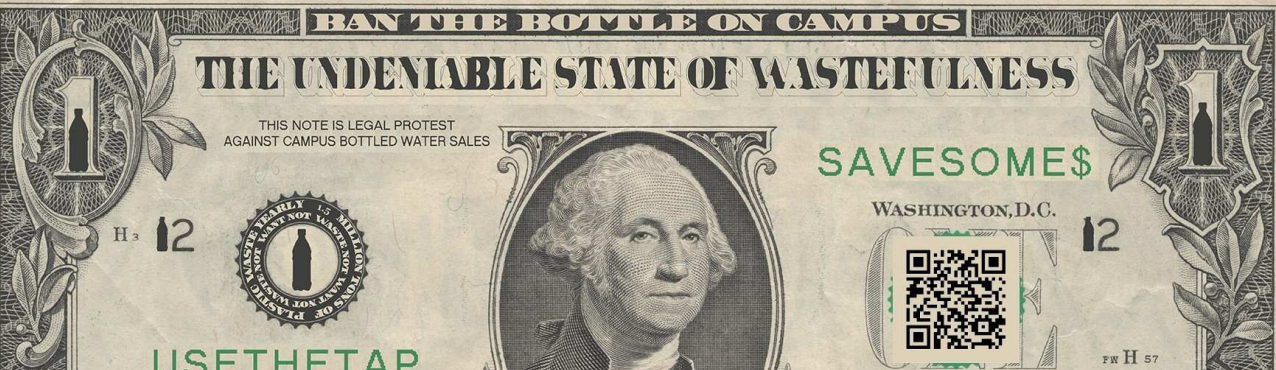


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**STOP RECYCLING
A BAD IDEA
BAN THE BOTTLE**







**BAN
THE
BOTTLE**

Acknowledgments

Thanks to Marguerite Perret and the Washburn University Art Department for inviting me to be a part of this special project. Thanks to the Mulvane Art Museum staff for their thoughtful advice and expert help in putting together and maintaining our installation, and to members of the Lawrence Field Office of the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture for facilitating our Imagining. Thanks also to all of the volunteer participants who added their thoughts and drawings to our Message(s) in a Bottle, and helped craft poems at our Imagining Water Through Poetry workshop.

This project would not have been possible without the commitment and creativity of the Half Empty student team. I am in your gratitude.

Special thanks to long term Washburn Art Department Chair Glenda Taylor, who helped support this project. She was a visionary arts administrator who has left us too soon and will be missed.

For more about Half Empty -
halfemptyproject.blogspot.com

To watch the "SipCo: The best bottled water known to man" video -
https://youtu.be/LwO_dBm6DIQ

For more about the campaign to ban bottled water -
banthebottle.net

For more about the U.S. Department of Arts and Culture -
usdac.us

ART

**WHAT HAPPENS
WHEN IT
RUNS OUT?**





...wastal state
(every flush goes to the
Gulf)

Water
is processed
to a point
that we
drink
because
it's important
to our
world.
this was
wrote
octo
loves
to



Five minutes
but my
e into my toilet
for relaxed in

Water is special

Every plan
and water!

If love can
be found
the intricate
of the
...
then all we
cherish about
love and life
is as simple
as a pool of
...



... special.
for granted.
it.

Remember, water