

## Thirteen.

**Introduction:**

For my integrative project, I am making a 38-foot long illustration/ info-graphic that tells the story of the future of humanities water crisis. As a Romanian-born, I have experienced what it is to not have safe sink water or to only be allowed to take baths once a week and to travel far distances to get drinkable water. Not having that security is a very hard thing to live with. Understanding that within 13 years, half of the world may live with this kind of fear is unsettling. I hope to show people that water scarcity is not something they should be take lightly so I am happy to show them all the ways they will suffer.

**Context:**

There are about three categories relating to issues of the water crisis: privatizing water; water pollution; and excessive use of water. All three of these play a role in exacerbating the scarcity of water. The World Economic Forum says that the lack of water is the “#1 global risk based on impact to society. The worry is clear among many world organizations and higher officials that there is a grave threat to our lives with the emerging water crisis.

This project is important now because the time line is 13 years before half of the world will be in high water stressed conditions, yet the problem is not being addressed. Considering this: companies have already polluted 40% of our available clean water source. The largest source of ground water in the USA, the Ogallala Aquifer, has depleted by 60% in the past 50 years. And then consider the projected climate change because 68% of our fresh water resources are frozen in glaciers and ice caps, as well as, the population growth, which will require 40% more water in 13 years that we currently have available. How will we possibly be able to maintain our water needs within the

next 13 years?

We need water to live, we need water to grow our crops and animal, we need water to produce our thermoelectric power as well as our fuels. Without electricity, we can't produce products, we can't heat our homes, and we can't use our electronics. Without water, we can't support our economy, we can't support our military, we can't maintain medicine and we certainly can't keep the majority of our jobs. Worst of all, with half of the world in grave need for water, it will be hard to maintain peace.

My project will take on the issue of "What will we lose". The goal of this project is to inform a middle class audience that water is engrained into every single part of our society, our things, and our lives, thus everything the viewer sees on the scroll depends on water to exist. This project is important because it is time that people are educated enough to really begin to appreciate and conserve their water usage even if they are not directly interacting with water.

**Methodology:**

The majority of my methodology consisted of observations, visualizations, mind mapping, and taking peer feedback. At first I was passionate about privatization of water, so a lot of my sketches were activist based. But peer feedback told me that my sketches at the time were all too cliché. So research continued. I started to realize that the more pressing issue was not about fighting these companies but rather educating my audience that these companies are polluting our waters, they are putting a price on our lives and that they don't have any regulations on their waters. From there I started to watch documentaries and understood that there is a much larger impending threat: that water is already becoming scarce.

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I was so focused for so long on the issue of thirst that once I began to also understand how much water is really going into every infrastructure and part of our society, I felt defeated. I felt scared that there is no clear message in our society telling us to conserve water when already  $\frac{1}{4}$  of our world is suffering from water shortage – and soon to be  $\frac{1}{2}$  in 13 years.

My first printed iterations for my project were posters. I spent a lot of time finding other uses of symbols for the water crisis, and in my exploration, I came across repetitive imagery. Some of which were an hourglass, a baby, water droplets, a facet, fishbowls, and earth. Often slogans like “Save water, save life” or “It all comes down to water” were the only things to accompany these images. They were so ambiguous that I didn’t know if they were talking about the world or Africa. They also lacked a sense of a timeline, along with clear consequences of the issue, and any education on how it is happening and why it is happening. I was thoroughly confused and as a result I found that I was making confusing posters myself.



As I continued my search, I finally came across something that had the emotional impact I was trying to go for. A photographer named Mustafah Abdulaziz, created a photographic series called “Water stories” which shows peoples’ relationship to water all around the world. Talking about his work Mustafah said that, “Water is one of the great challenges of our time. Across the planet we are seeing our fundamental relationship with water called into question...” This was the most successful attempt at

showing the connection of water to infrastructure to people. This led me to decide to become illustrative in my approach to the issue. I began to sketch an image of an entire society dependent on water and it became a 38 foot long image. Instead of letting an audience distance themselves, thinking that they don't use that much water, I wanted to show them that every part of their lives is dependent on water.



Researching modern scrolls, I found James Jean's "Rift 2" which depicts rather a romanticized fable and Shahzia Sikander's "Life of a Modern Pakistani Woman" who created a very illustrative depiction of her personal experience as a Pakistani woman. What is really beautiful about their work is that they are so effective because one can view the entire story line all at once and then they invite the viewer to come and admire the details up close. For the same reason, I also decided to stick with a scroll format instead of an accordion book or a web presence – they allow me to show the whole story all at once.

### **Creative Work:**

How might the conditions of the world change in the next 13 years as we run out of clean water? As the audience walks along the scroll, they will notice 13 themes, one dedicated to each year. Time is split by a thin line, which reads the year vertically across the illustration.

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Between each line, the themes are as follows: 2017 starts with products and material goods; 2018 is about the city, jobs, and homes; 2019 is about transportation; 2020 is about entertainment, theme parks, and concerts; 2021 is about agriculture and meat; 2022 is about education, businesses, and factories; 2023 is about home and comfort; 2024 is about the splitting of class; 2025 is about highways and construction; 2026 is about domestic security, military, and questioned power of the government; 2027 is about sanitation and mass death; 2028 and 2029 is about wildlife and various ecosystems; 2030 – finishes with the destruction of national security.



Across the 38-foot long scroll, there is a sudden shift from the first half of the scroll to the second half. Nothing seems strange at first, but then the color scheme drastically changes in the middle representing the effect that ignorance will play in our futures.

Notice the river that flows through two thirds of the illustration never being the focus of the work but being the life force. The water is present but always being taken for granted. Once the water stops, I want to show the struggle and the lengths people have to go to survive when water is no longer easily accessible.

I want my audience to notice the split of classes that happens in the middle of the scroll. I want them to contemplate what side of the wall they would stand on... would they be safe with the haves or would they be with the less fortunate have not's.

I want my audience to see the 3,000 little people on the scroll and to be able to step back and realize that it is not just their lives at stake but a whole population's lives

that can be majorly affected by the water crisis. By being a third party who knows how the story ends, I hope my viewer will experience dramatic irony as they go through the story line.

As my viewers look closely through the isometric shapes that use colorful and playful design, I hope they feel uncomfortable about how toy-like and fun and playful that world seems juxtaposed to the horrible things that happen on the scroll.



### **Conclusion:**

The result of this yearlong project is an explorative storyline that allows viewers to look into the future and recognize the catastrophes to come if we continue to waste our fresh water resource. Thirteen gives information about water consumption to hopefully encourage smart choices about future water consumption. It is a visual representation of the magnitude of water scarcity.

My future areas of exploration would be to create character storylines that interact with the narrative to move the story along better. I would like to explore different pathways that the water crisis can take – and show my audience how their choices affect the future. For future distribution I would love to make smaller scrolls that would be neatly packaged and branded and sold in a bookstore for ease of distribution of information.

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