

THE MAGAZINE BEACH TAPESTRY

We created this monumental artwork in collaboration with many community volunteers – of all ages. Neighbors, visitors, and even tourists dropped in and worked with us to collect and transform single use plastic trash into this vibrant work of art! Michelle provided the artistic vision and expertise and Cecily organized workshops and collaborations with community partners. We wanted to celebrate the opening of Mass Audubon’s newest nature center here at the historic Powder Magazine. Our goal: to create art to call attention to the dangers of plastic pollution and to inspire YOU and others to take individual and collective action. Plastic is infiltrating our world in pieces small and large, threatening the health of all living creatures on the planet.

OUR PARTNERS

Mass Audubon generously hosted our project and Magazine Beach Partners got us started; both provided support and friendship in so many ways. Teen artists from the Community Art Center and the 3rd grade art class of the Morse School made the pennants over the entrance; the Community Art Center teens also ran outreach workshops to invite neighbors to create “Talismans” – the drawings that you can discover framed in lids, showing animals that people love. Gallery 263 hosted our first workshops and connected us with their community, and the Charles River Conservancy enlisted 100+ volunteers in collecting plastic trash along the river during their annual Earth Day Clean Up. Thanks to all of these great partners, and also to our financial supporters: the Mass. Cultural Council, Magazine Beach Partners, and many individual donors also contributed support!

MORE THAN 8.3 BILLION TONS OF PLASTIC PRODUCED SINCE THE 1950S

Most of this plastic ends up in landfill and the natural environment, where it accumulates. Currently, only 5 to 8% of plastic is recycled, in part because the industry that produces plastic has no responsibility for collecting and recycling it. Plastic never goes “away” – it is not biodegradable; it breaks down into smaller pieces, eventually becoming microplastics -- imperceptible by eye – and enters the food chain.

We humans consume microplastics in our water, food and air. Recent studies have shown that we ingest an estimated 5 grams of plastic a week – that’s as much as a credit card. You have probably seen pictures of sea birds, dolphins, whales, turtles and other wildlife entangled in plastic or dead from having eaten plastic instead of food. Discarded plastic is super-strong, which is why it can become a dangerous trap for animals, from six-pack holders to “ghost nets” discarded by the fishing industry in the oceans.

ART TO BUILD COMMUNITY, SPARK ACTION, OFFER PLEASURE!

We hope you enjoy the final artwork, an abstracted representation of the Roseate Tern – Mass Audubon’s mascot – surrounded by nature. Meticulously constructed by many hands, it is designed to bring you joy while also prompting reflection and strengthening stewardship, all goals vital to Mass. Audubon and this new nature center.

Michelle Lougee
Artist • mlougee.com

Cecily Miller
Curator/Arts Organizer • cecilymiller.org

TAKE A DEEPER DIVE

Students in the Marine Conservation Club of Cambridge Rindge & Latin High School used “thinglink” to put together links for you to learn more about the Charles River, plastics and pollution. Point your phone’s camera at the QR codes to open each thinglink page and then tap on photos to get to related link(s) to podcasts and news articles.



WHAT DO YOU SEE THAT IS FAMILIAR FROM YOUR OWN HOME?
CAN YOU FIND THE DINOSAUR & RABBIT?
HOW MANY PIECES DO YOU THINK ARE ON THIS ENTIRE TAPESTRY?

WATCH A 2-MINUTE MOVIE BY OWEN MACK ABOUT THE TAPESTRY PROJECT



WHAT CAN YOU DO?

You can take steps to reduce plastic in your daily life, but it is difficult. Refill stores are popping up, farmers markets reduce packaging, etc. We need to work together to demand systemic change. Europeans have taken steps to ban some unnecessary single use plastic and we can do it here too! In fact, residents of nearby Arlington, MA just successfully worked together to ban plastic bottled water from their town. Plastic is convenient, but it is also a deadly big business, part of the powerful fossil fuel industry. Collective action will be necessary to achieve systemic change, so that when you go to the grocery store or get takeout food, you are not forced to use plastic that is thrown away after a single use.

Consider getting involved with a community group working against plastic. Many towns have Zero Waste committees. A group that has helped us is Beyond Plastics Greater Boston, a new local chapter of the national Beyond Plastics organization; check out BeyondPlastics.org and email BeyondPlasticsGreaterBoston@gmail.com for more information.



CHARLES RIVER



OCEAN POLLUTION



MICROPLASTICS



MACROPLASTICS



ORIGINS & EFFECTS