

THIRTEEN THOUSAND SIX HUNDRED NINETY-NINE

When I read that five million people die every year from water-related diseases, I wondered why there was no alarm sounding. The figure haunted me until I decided to translate the statistic visually.

The installation, *13,699*, is being created to raise awareness of the number of people who die every day from water-related diseases because they do not have access to clean water. Clear plastic, recycled water bottle caps are used to symbolize these deaths. The object of this installation is to present the opportunity to experience physically the magnitude of this humanitarian crisis statistic.

The caps have been collected from the Keene, NH recycling center and are strung on monofilament and hung from a 10' x 10' steel grid. An 8' x 8' x 8' steel frame supports the grid and has one point of access and exit. There is an open five foot circle in the middle. The lines, strung with bottle caps, are hung from the metal grid at staggered three inch increments around and above the open center circle.

The choice of using plastic bottle caps calls attention to other environmental issues surrounding bottled

water, such as privatization, depletion of aquifers, the environmental impact of plastic waste, the use of fossil fuels in making plastic, the carbon footprint of shipping bottled water, and the leaching of plastic into our water sources.

Primarily a print maker and painter, my work has always been informed by the landscape. As my awareness of global water issues grew, I made the decision to make water the theme of all of my work. In 2007 I realized that my serene fine art could not communicate all I wanted to say about these important issues and decided to design an installation that illustrated disturbing statistics with the same meditative qualities as my two-dimensional work. My intention is to engender an appreciation for and stewardship of one of our most precious natural resources –

water, as well as inspire advocacy for the disenfranchised who are trying to live without basic needs.

Making it Public

The production of *13,699* is as important as the installation itself. Awareness of the global water crisis and the degree of suffering caused by lack of clean water is limited. I have worked with high school students in Keene, Peterborough, and Concord on the production of *13,699* and have engaged the public at GreenFest, an environmental festival, at Government Center in Boston in September, 2008. Graduate students at Antioch New England strung bottle caps after listening to my

presentation at their semi-annual student coffee house last November. Students at New England College in Henniker, NH will work on the project in honor of Earth Day. In July, the completed project will be installed at the Sharon Arts Center in Peterborough, NH and it will be part of the exhibit, *Down Stream*, at the Thorne-Sagendorph Art Gallery at Keene State College in September. Students at the Salem Academy Charter School in



Massachusetts are drilling and stringing bottle caps as a senior service project. Working on this project in a group gives rise to conversation and debate about what we as individuals can do to change our personal water use and consumer habits. Using art to raise awareness exposes students to the option of creative expression as a path to social change. Oftentimes taken for granted – the experience of working on this installation deepens understanding of water's essential nature.

For more information, please call Christine Destrempe at 603.827.3744 or email at cdestrempe@myfairpoint.net

13,699 is a sponsored project of *Fractured Atlas*, a non-profit arts service organization. Contributions in behalf of *13,699* may be made payable to *Fractured Atlas* and are tax-deductible to the extent permitted by law.