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The Misunderstanding: Waste

Koppelkamm, Leo

Will our waste be the sediment of the Anthropocene? The world's population produces 3.5 tons of waste every day. This number is expected to double by 2025 and the impact on our planet is already noticeable. Plastics in the ocean combine to form giant islands of waste and are then broken down into microscopic particles that will eventually find their way back into our food supply. On land, open landfills and incineration plants without filters contaminate the groundwater, air, and soil. Industrialized countries are responsible for the majority of today's waste, but Asia and Africa are not far behind. We need to start dealing with our resources more responsibly and produce more goods that are fully biodegradable and can be reused indefinitely.



Waste
Leo Koppelkamm

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The Misunderstanding: Waste
Text and images by Leo Koppelkamm
University of the Arts (UdK), Berlin



The Misunderstanding

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A bird sanctuary near a saltwater lake.
Somewhere in the desert.

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It's a long trip, but I don't mind.

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Because I can sleep.

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At some point, my girlfriend wakes me up:
“Hey look, the first ones!”

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"Oh."

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We didn't see any birds on our trip.
But we sure did see plenty of plastic bags.

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Artist's Comment:

While researching this topic, I was reminded of an experience I had while traveling through Morocco with friends. The waste that accumulated in the cities and villages were hauled out into the sand dunes as the wind carried loose plastic bags into the dessert. These were spread so far and wide that it was possible to recognize that one was approaching a new village by the density of plastic in the wind.

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The comic also appears in Alexandra Hamann, Reinhold Leinfelder, Helmuth Trischler, and Henning Wagenbreth, eds., *Anthropozän – 30 Meilensteine auf dem Weg in ein neues Erdzeitalter. Eine Comic-Anthologie* (Munich: Deutsches Museum, 2014).

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Further readings:

- Sources and Literature for the Anthropocene Milestone Comics

Related links:

- Welcome to the Anthropocene. The Earth in Our Hands. Special exhibition at the Deutsches Museum http://www.deutsches-museum.de/en/exhibitions/special-exhibitions/archive/2015/anthropocene/
- Welcome to the Anthropocene. The Earth in Our Hands. Virtual exhibition on the Environment & Society Portal http://environmentandsociety.org/node/6354
- Comic-Anthology, Deutsches Museum Website http://www.deutsches-museum.de/sammlungen/entdecken/comics/
- National Ocean Service - "What is the Great Pacific Garbage Patch?" https://oceanservice.noaa.gov/facts/garbagepatch.html
- National Science Foundation - "The Great Pacific Garbage Patch explained" https://www.nsf.gov/news/mmg/mmg_disp.jsp

Websites linked in image captions:

- http://www.deutsches-museum.de/de/ausstellungen/mensch-umwelt/umwelt/wachstum/