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Art in a Public Space
Personal Statement

Consume and Perish Or Recycle and Flourish

We hear it all the time: “You should be drinking eight 8-oz glasses of water each day.” Whether this is a myth or the truth, the reality is that we as human beings need water to survive. Not only are we composed of seventy-five percent water, but we also require water to live. Despite water’s associated symbolism with purity and life, water ironically is one of the most commercialized products in today’s market. With one-hundred and sixty-five different brands of bottled water in the United States¹, water is sadly tainted with the downsides of commercialism. We have no choice but to buy into this consumer-based world, but this is wrong – we *do* have a choice. We do have a choice to rise above commercialism of water. If you want to drink bottled water, why not make your own?

Consume or perish, or recycle and flourish. Most of today’s population chooses to consume or perish. In other words, you must consume and be a consumer water in order to live; else, you will not survive. On the other hand, you can live your life without succumbing to commercialism by recycling and making your own bottled water. There are many different kinds of filters that can be used to purify tap water in your own home. In other places, such as New York, the tap water “is every bit as good as bottled Evian.”² The bottom line is that there is no need to buy bottled water. Not only will you save money, but you will also save plastic.

The answer seems so simple. So why then does most of American society spend money on bottled water and waste plastic materials? “There is a public perception that municipal water is not as safe as it could be,” explains Walt Boyes, principal of Spitzer and Boyes, a consulting firm for water treatment and distribution.² Most people believe that tap water contains lead poisoning or harmful minerals. In some places, this is very true, but in other cities like New York, people still spend millions of dollars per day on bottled water. Are people scared of tap water? Do they consider tap water as lower class? Are they just lazy? Even though, I do not know the answer, I *do* know that it could not hurt to educate people. Hence, the EngLand Spring project.

Initially, I was going to create a large water bottle just to get people’s attention and to make them aware of the money spent on water and the commercialism that surrounds it. This large water bottle would hold the volume of water that a single person is expected to consume in one year if we use the standard of eight 8-oz glasses of water everyday. To purchase this much water, we literally have to spend approximately \$1381 on water per year alone. How can we spend this amount of money on something that we need to survive, something that should be free to us. We spend this money so we can buy “the best quality” of water, but how do we know which is the best quality? What makes one brand of water better than the other? Why is Evian better than Nestle water? Why

can Evian charge twice as much? Why do Dasani (made by Coca Cola) and Aquafina (made by Pepsi) not list the actual source of the water on their web site? Does Poland Spring really get their water from the “purest spring in Maine”? Many of these questions lead me to believe that the bottled water industry is simply a marketing trap that all Americans have fallen to. Therefore, I wanted my art to increase consumer awareness – to let people know that they do not have to spend their money on bottled water. By placing a large water bottle in front of the supermarket Laverdes in the student center, I felt that people would realize the actual volumes of water that they consume and the money they waste on it. A drawback of this type of public art is that the largeness and oddness of this water bottle would indeed draw attention, but maybe only one time. Also, it would very possibly be a fleeting thought in the viewer’s mind instead of leaving a lasting impact in the viewer’s life, leading me to develop my own brand: EngLand Spring.

Modeled to look like a Poland Spring bottle, the brand EngLand Spring has a different objective. The goal is to increase people’s awareness of commercialism and teach them how to recycle and filter water. With these empty bottles, they can filter and bottle their own water. After the bottle is empty, they can reuse the bottle! This interactive art project will make people think about what they are buying and alternatives to bottle water.

References

1. Geiser, Peter M. 1996-2004. <http://www.mineralwaters.org/>
2. Karolefski, John. 15 Apr 2002. http://www.brandchannel.com/features_effect.asp?pf_id=88#more