



The Keepers of the Watershed

Tessa Devoe, Jillian Wall, Claire Werner, Charlotte Howe, Claire McElwain, Lori Lafrance, Carly Restuccia

"Young people have a strong moral compass and are willing to do the right thing even when it is difficult, they are true change makers. Their generation will continue to set us on a more sustainable path so that future generations might have the same opportunities we enjoy."

~ Lori Lafrance

Artist's Statement:

I've always been a fan of group portraits from the Dutch Golden Age, and so I immediately knew what I wanted to do when I was approached to create this portrait. These paintings, known as *regentenstuk* in Dutch, (literally "regents' piece"), were frequently commissioned in the 1600's to document a guild group, notable accomplishment, or significant occasion. Subjects were frequently depicted seated at a table, looking at the viewer, in a room filled with allegorical content. A visual balance among the individuals gave the sense of collaboration.

I'm in complete awe of what these women accomplished. It was a pleasure to work with them.

~ Cynthia August

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Key to the Elements

1. **Map of Ipswich.** This map of Ipswich shows both the Ipswich River and the Atlantic. At the core of the ban on plastic and polystyrene was a desire to protect this endangered river and the ocean from human pollution.
2. **The Blue Dragon (Ipswich Marsh) by Arthur Wesley Dow.** Arthur Wesley Dow was an American painter born in Ipswich in 1857. He was a founding member of the Ipswich Historical Society and his art focused largely on the natural landscape of Ipswich.
3. **Heraldic Crest with Tigers and Clams.** Both tigers and clams are integral symbols of Ipswich. The Ipswich Public School System's mascot is a tiger, while clams and the clamming industry is a cornerstone of the town's economy.
4. **American Women Conservationists by Madelyn Holmes.** Madelyn Holmes wrote a series of twelve profiles of female American conservationists who changed the way Americans think about their relationship to the environment. They served as role models for the women behind the ban and gave them the power to do the same.
5. **Mercenaria mercenaria (Hard Clam).** The hard clam is a native species along the Ipswich coastline. It is one of many species negatively affected by human pollution.
6. **Styrofoam Packaging.** Styrofoam packaging was one of the materials targeted by the ban. Once in an ecosystem, Styrofoam will take over 500 years to degrade. Due to its relative immortality, Styrofoam, along with single-use plastics, is a significant source of pollution in the Atlantic Ocean.
7. **Drinking Water.** The river is not only home to many different species of fish and wildlife, but the source of drinking water for Ipswich and thirteen other towns on the North Shore including: Beverly, Boxford, Danvers, Hamilton, Lynn, Lynnfield, Middleton, North Reading, Peabody, Salem, Topsfield, Wenham, and Wilmington.
8. **Market Basket Single-Use Bag.** Like Styrofoam packaging, single-use plastic bags constitute a large portion of the pollution found in the Ipswich River Watershed. By instituting the ban, its creators hoped to reduce, and eventually eradicate, human's effect on the ecosystem.
9. **Alosa pseudoharengus (Alewife).** Alewife are native to the Ipswich River. They were noticeably absent from the river ecosystem for many years. After efforts began to clean up the riverbed, conservationists began to see many native species return to the river.
10. **Ipswich Bylaws Chapter 172, Plastic Bags and Polystyrene Containers.** The goal of the women pictures was to propose and pass a bylaw banning the use of plastic and polystyrene in Ipswich. They hoped that this law would create a significant dent in the footprint humans have left on the Ipswich River Watershed and its native species.
11. **Hydrangea paniculata (Hydrangea Tree Branch).** The hydrangea plant is the artist's personal symbol of growth and renewal. Its presence symbolizes a commitment to conservation and social activism.
12. **CVS Re-useable Plastic Bag.** Following the initial ban, several businesses in town attempted to circumvent the bylaw by using plastic bags labelled as "Re-useable". While the bags were indeed re-useable, they were still plastic and ended up in the water. Diligent effort resulted in these businesses' eventual compliance.
13. **Newspaper Article.** The ban and its creators made headlines in many local news outlets. Seen here is an article from *The Ipswich Chronicle*, which features a photograph of the only ban contributor not pictured here, Carly Restuccia.
14. **Sand Dollar.** The sand dollar is another native species deeply affected by human pollution in the Ipswich and Eastern Coastline. The plastic and polystyrene ban attempts to preserve their ecosystem so they may continue to thrive and decorate the coast for centuries to come.