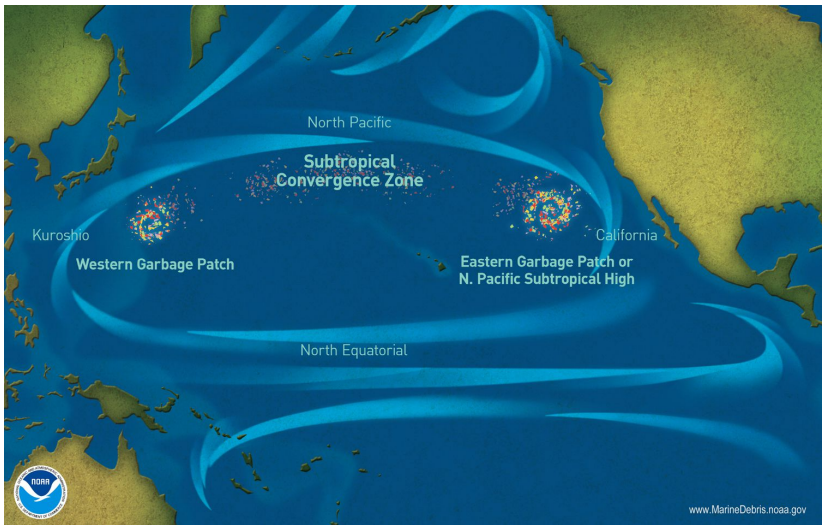
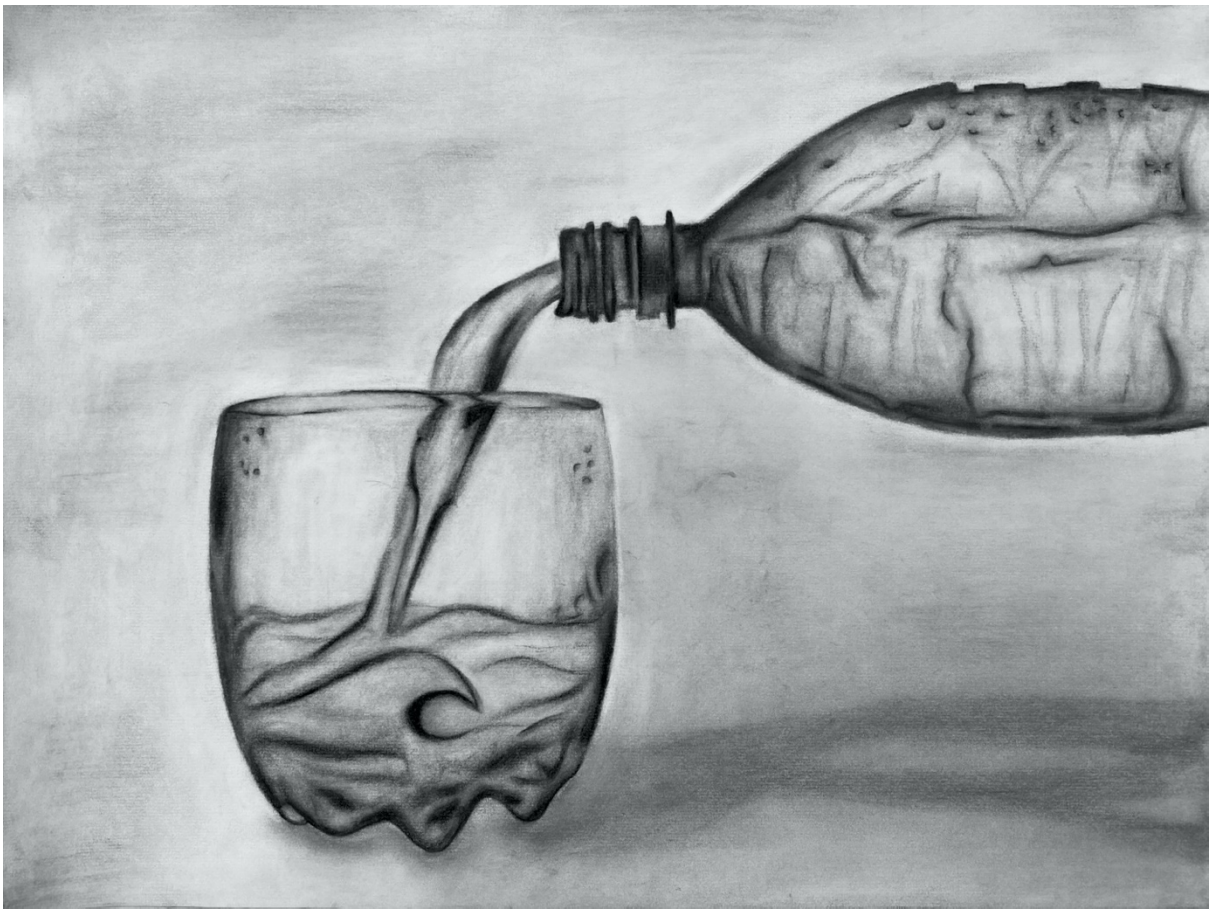
## The 'I' In Microplastics

Remy Zimmerman (CU Major in Sociology with minors in ATOC and Communications) first learned about the Great Pacific Garbage Patch in Dr. Kris Karnauskas' ATOC oceanography course. Studying this phenomenon compelled Remy to help people realize the global impact of their personal choices. To this end, she pursued an independent study in Spring 2020 with ATOC instructor Dr. Derek Brown as her mentor. After researching the complex feedback between the Garbage Patch and society over the semester, Remy explored multiple ways of communicating these links to a general audience. She initially considered traditional communication methods such as creating informative pamphlets and websites. However, Remy ultimately decided to use her unique talent for art to reach and educate the lay public, with the goal of effecting a change in behavior on the individual level. She felt that art would allow her to have an emotional and psychologic impact on her audience that could not be achieved with dry facts alone. Since the COVID pandemic denied Remy adequate on-campus studio space for her planned oversized multi-media sculpture, she was forced to revise her original project to a smaller scale. In lieu of her sculpture, she designed a unique charcoal drawing to convey her message that individual choices result in global change. She consciously chose her artistic medium to be charcoal, whose compressed carbon speaks to the $CO_2$ accumulation causing global warming – another representation of human intervention damaging our environment. Ultimately, what emerged from her artistic process was an eloquent and powerful representation of the direct human connection to the ever-growing problem in the Pacific Ocean.



Remy Zimmerman. *The 'I' in Microplastics. 2020*, Charcoal on paper.

*The Garbage Patch in our ocean is a direct result from human creation and consumption of plastic; this patch has been created by the North Pacific Gyre, which circulates in a direction that picks up trash from our oceans along the way - a magnetic field, per se, which is strictly catalyzed from the Coriolis Effect on our ocean waters. Gyres accumulate ocean debris as they move throughout water and that debris is eventually redirected in a way that congregates rubbish in their centers. Solar radiation breaks this trash down into smaller particles, known as microplastics, which never truly go away. To put this more simply, the plastic that we use every day is only multiplied in our ocean waters once we dispose of such material. Microplastics hold a toxic connotation; not only do they put aquatic animals and plants at risk, but they pose a risk to humans as well.*

*My aim in this artwork was to creatively communicate the problem of plastic; I wanted to shine a light on how the plastic that we use never truly goes away, but is rather filtered upon our oceans, and then filtered back on land through natural waters and seafood. Humans create the plastic that eventually makes our own species vulnerable to such toxicity - hence the plastic water bottle pouring a glass of ocean water. Art has the power to speak louder than words, and I hope that this drawing speaks loudly... in a way that pushes people to realize, rethink and reduce their single-use plastic.*

-Remy Zimmerman, University of Colorado Class of 2020