

Rethink Plastic

Rachel Heibel

While touring the Kelsey Museum of Archeology, I found myself enthralled with the idea of amphoras after our tour guide referred to these large ceramic vessels as the “plastic bag of ancient times.” I learned that amphoras were very common in the early days of maritime trade, and they were used to carry materials such as grain, oil, wine, and wheat. These large coil vessels were made quickly, used to transport something, and then discarded. This is exactly the way that we treat a plastic bag from carrying our favorite take out dinner to our groceries. Although my tour guide was casually commenting on how abundant amphoras were during the time period, the unintentional idea of the object being an expendable one was what resonated with me.

I wanted to expand on my tour guide’s metaphor, and make it into an image. The amphora’s shape was inspired from my favorite parts of traditional amphoras from around the world. I decided to use a solid white background with the infamous red “Thank You” because it is so recognizable. The distinctive image of the repetitive red “Thank You” is where the problem lies. There are so many plastic bags in our landfills, oceans, and everywhere in between, that it is impossible to avoid being thanked for choosing plastic. My intention is for this piece is to pose self-reflection upon the viewer, a parallel experience to my own realization during my visit at the Kelsey Museum.

At first sight, these amphoras appeared to be wonderful works of art. Our tour guide explained how simple and average these vessels were to people from this time period. Learning about the usage of the amphora made me recognize humans' inherent carelessness. This tendency only began to hurt our planet when the materials of our waste became destructful. Not only does plastic accumulate because it takes nearly 1,000 years to decompose, but the convenient and effective nature of plastic gives us even more reason to choose it. Through this piece, I hope to challenge people to think about the materials they use and the entire life of the products produced from them. While doing so, I hope to start a conversation about wasteful habits that can be altered in order to preserve our planet.