

The Bird's Eye View

A Project Created by

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350

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Abstract

The Bird's Eye View is a network of recycled art installations, constructed on rooftops, in collaboration and support of 350, an international grass-roots organization. The organization encourages individuals and communities world-wide to create direct action projects that will promote the reduction of carbon emissions and affect the United Nations in their decisions about environmental reform this December. This particular installation is being completed domestically and globally by a network of young people. The goal of this project is to create the number 350, using recycled materials, on rooftops across the world. The completed installations are to be photographed and then presented utilizing broad and creative media outlets. The images send a message of green peace, global solidarity, and a broadened human perspective. The network of activists completing this project is ever expanding, and this is your invitation to become involved in a movement in the direction of a sustainable future for our planet!

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Introduction

Our environment is under attack...

With each day that passes, the world is arriving closer to a breaking point, to the end of this atmosphere as we know it. Whether or not we acknowledge it, the truth is that our decisions today will ultimately determine what kind of place we will inhabit tomorrow, if we have any place at all. So much of what propels our problem is rooted in ignorance and indifference, intolerable injustice that pulls us apart as a people, and causes us to see things from a narrowed, individualistic perspective. What we have on our hands is a truly global problem, which cannot be solved unless we are willing to break down boundaries and work together. In order to find a solution for such a catastrophic issue, tangled up in our own fallible view points, we must broaden our perspectives and see this earth as a whole. We must look beyond language barriers, our own scope of shapes, sizes, and colors. We must see, in essence, that all there is, is one world... We must see from a BIRD'S EYE VIEW!

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Background

Why 350?

Over the course of the Industrial Revolution, and into life as we know it, changes have come about to make our world a more efficient place to live. Human beings have created automobiles, ocean liners, and fuel-engine airplanes. We have created ways to burn coal more effectively, machines to pump oil more swiftly, and chemicals to keep our grass green. We also have created a gigantic problem affectionately known as GLOBAL WARMING. In order for our planet, and all of its inhabitants, to exist safely, our atmosphere should contain no more than 350 parts per million (ppm) of carbon. This number, 350, has been identified by leading scientists, including Dr. Pachauri, chairman of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, as the number we must work together to obtain. Currently the amount of carbon in the air is 387 ppm and rising, producing detrimental effects on the atmosphere, and our climates. We are in grave danger, and we are all in that danger together.

This December, United Nations leaders will sit together in Copenhagen, Denmark to discuss the need for support, morally, communally, and financially, from nations across the world, to unite in putting a stop to global warming, and saving the one thing we all share: our planet! The reforms that could potentially take place at this year's UN summit would lead to the necessary funding of alternate energy initiatives, and a more cohesive plan for internationally reducing carbon emissions through direct and indirect policy. Environmental author, Bill McKibben, has co-founded the international organization, 350 (350.org), to call the world to action on October 24, 2009. He, along with scientists, scholars, and common people around the world, believe it is important that we show the United Nations that change is important to us, and that we are willing to work together to ensure a healthy and green future for our planet. Collectively, we have caused the problem, with nations like the United States leading the pack in pollution and wastefulness, but together, we are sure to make a difference in reducing the risk of climate change. 350 encourages us to muster our energy from now until October 24 in producing direct action projects that will showcase the number 350!

As a result, the project at hand was created. The vision was such that a network could be formed involving people from all over the world to take part in one unified action, one in support of the reduction of carbon emissions. In the time leading up to October 24th, people from all over the world will be coordinating their own signs of support in the form of 'nests', the rooftop installations made of used materials that compose the giant number 350 when viewed from above. The goal is to make this project as far reaching as possible, but your help is needed!

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Why YOU should get involved

Our goal is to provide our world an avenue through which they can express support for the reduction of carbon emissions. The United Nations December summit is quickly approaching, so we must continue to act now in order to make our message most effective, most wide spread. We

are planning to have each member of our collective network established, with a completed nest, by October 24th, the international day of action for climate change. By creating these installations on rooftops across the world, we showcase a unified message of support for 350, the number that represents a safe level of carbon in the atmosphere.

The number 350 is effective, because it does not need to be translated and is understood by all people, universally. The numbers will be laid out across rooftops, and captured through photographs. The audience, which we hope will include as many humans as possible, will receive these images from various media outlets, and metaphorically engage in a broader perspective, tangibly seeing that we are one world. The placement of the nests will also present a new way of viewing buildings. We are quite familiar with the interior and exteriors of buildings, yet we seldom become acquainted with, are aware of, and take for granted the rooftop, the part that is always overhead. Similarly, global warming is always looming above our heads, but many of us never acknowledge it all.

We are asking you to join us in this endeavor, to build a nest in your own community, at your own school or university, and become part of a movement to save our planet. We cannot do this alone! The more spirited activists, and concerned citizens involved, the wider our view will be. We need to take a cue from the birds and start becoming aware of all that is around us! We need to be the change our planet desperately needs, and here's how you can do it!

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Build a Nest Near You!

Gather Materials! This will be an ongoing process! Most nests will be made primarily of used materials because we can conserve resources by putting to use the objects that others would normally discard. For the most part, the best materials will be ones that can be easily laid down and picked back up because we will want as simple installation and deconstruction processes as possible. Materials such as tarps or pool liners are great, as they are water proof and easily folded up and transported, but keep your eyes out for bed sheets, plastic bags, potato sacks, and whatever else you can find. More importantly, though, be creative!! Farms, boat yards, and construction sites are all places that have great potential, but the whole world is open to your imagination! The places that you will look and gather materials will be unique to the area where you are and therefore so will your materials. This will only add to the beauty of this project! Round up your friends, work with staff members and student groups on campus, and gather as much as you can!

Scope out the Area! There are so many buildings around you, but some are better than others. A nice flat roof will provide a surface that will allow the materials to stay in place. A rule of thumb for scoping out rooftops is "the bigger, the better". If you have an extremely large surface, but do not cover it all in the end, it is still better than not having enough room for all of the materials you've gathered! Perhaps it will even be possible to use three different rooftops and put one digit on each! Another thing you may want to keep in the back of your mind when seeking rooftops is that photographs will be taken as documentation of the completion of the project. Maybe you would prefer a rooftop that is visible from other larger surrounding buildings, or perhaps you

would like to hide the installation and reveal it to others solely by use of documentation and media coverage. This may not be major factors when deciding which rooftops to utilize, but may be something you would like to consider!

Get permission! This is very important, but is definitely possible. Once you have an idea of the rooftops that would fit your vision best, it would be a good idea to approach a dean or an administrator to help you get the approval you need to see this project completed! The approval from your campus safety department will be necessary, but it will help that you have given the matter a lot of prior planning. While a lot of people will be needed to collect the great amount of materials that will be used to make the nest, limiting the number of people that will actually be on the rooftop will give the campus safety office peace of mind. Ventilation and drainage will be issues about which you will want to be as well informed as possible. If you have the backing of the deans or administration, are knowledgeable and have a set plan of action when approaching the campus safety and building managers, and have determination and a positive outlook you will be one step closer to having your vision materialize.

Plan Ahead! Once you know the specifics of which rooftops you will have access to, it would be a great idea to get the dimensions of the rooftop you will be utilizing. By working with the building manager, you will be able to get the dimensions of the surface without actually measuring the surface manually. From there, the nest can be planned out to best utilize the surfaces that are available. Depending on the materials you have accrued, it may even be possible to construct most of the nest on the ground! Using the dimensions as a guide, you can lay out all of the materials to form the numbers. It would be a good idea to consider which materials are the heaviest and place them along the edges of the digits so that they will hold the nest down. You may like to consider the colors and textures of the materials that you have collected, how they interact with one another, and what will make them the most visible. Once you have a firm idea of how you would like the materials to be laid out, it may be possible to fasten the materials together with industrial tape or even stitch work made of rope! It would be ideal to have the digits assembled so that all they only need to be unfolded and laid out on the rooftop.

Safety First! Working in accordance with the campus safety is an important factor in building a successful nest. As mentioned before, it is a good idea to limit the number of people who will actually be involved in laying the numbers out. While it is always good to have another perspective, it will be much safer if there are as few people as possible on the rooftops. This smaller team would lay out the materials and weight them down if need be. Depending on the materials being used, it will probably be a good idea to weight the nest down along the edges in some way. It would be a wise idea to consult the building manager about this beforehand, but also use your best judgment. If light, flimsy materials comprise your digits, it will most definitely be a good idea to make sure they will stay down in case a strong wind comes by!

Pick a Date! It is a good idea to work out a timeline that includes the days you will collect materials, plan and execute the nest, and take it down. This will help you get the word out so that more people get involved and excited. It would be great if the process could be documented in some fashion, but photographs of the finished nest are crucial! These are what will be sent out to the media and will raise the awareness around the world! So make sure to get photos before the

date of when your nest is scheduled to come down! It would also be a good idea to get this done before the threat of snow if that is an issue!

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The Scope!

The impact of this project will come from the sheer size of the network that is carrying this one unified message. The larger the network of parties involved, the more likely it will be that we grab the attention of the media. If we are going to influence the general public, we can do it so much more effectively by getting media coverage about our movement. The power behind this project lies within each one of its constituents, and thus, we must make this network as big as possible!! With your involvement, we are that much closer to getting media coverage on a local, national, or international scale. If enough colleges and universities take part in this, it will provide a resounding voice for our generation and hopefully for our country! Just think of how many people would ask "What's 350?". That provocation of a question is what we are looking for, because the answers will follow naturally! We just need you on board!

Once the nests are built, we need actual documentation through photography. These photos will be compiled in order to show the breadth that this project has spanned. There is the possibility of taking this documentation process a few steps further, but it all depends on how big this network becomes! One option is collaborating with groups such as Project Lighthawk that use airplanes to document environmental issues through the use of aerial photography. Another is through the use of satellites to obtain images that would serve as documentation for the massive size of the network that spans so much area.

This is an opportunity to unify your community around an important issue as well as to take a public stance against global warming. Not only would your involvement bring publicity, education, and important activist art to your surroundings, it would give a voice to so many people who have the same concerns. If we can amplify that voice, it will no doubt grab the attention of the media, and thus the general public, and hopefully the UN leaders that will be meeting in Copenhagen in December to preside over these very issues! This, however, can only happen with your help!

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Conclusion

"It goes on one at a time,
it starts when you care
to act, it starts when you do
it again after they said no,
it starts when you say We
and know who you mean, and each
day you mean one more." - Marge Piercy

For generations we have collectively produced a changing atmosphere that is threatening the existence of life on this planet, and although the natural and tangible beauty of the earth still hits our eyes, its longevity is at stake. We have begun to watch the world die... But, the world is not dead! And we are living, right now, at a pivotal point in history. We have the choice, the responsibility, and the right to bring it back to life. We have collectively caused damage to our planet, and so, it is going to take all of us to reverse that damage. It is going to take every one of us! An idea can be born in one person, but with two people it can become a reality, and with three people an organization. With all of us, it can become a movement! This is the defining moment, the chance for our generation to make a difference that will affect the future. This is a call to action, to use our imaginations to stand behind 350, to express to our leaders that we have a desire to create green peace, to create change...

We can be that change...
We have to be...

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